CHILDREN'S NATURE STORY-SERMONS

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CHILDREN'S NATURE STORY-SERMONS

WORKS BY

HUGH T. KERR, D.D.

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Children's Nature Story-Sermons

By

HUGH T. KERR, D.D.,

Pastor, Shadyside Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Author of "Children's Missionary-Story Sermons," "Children's Story-Sermons," "Children's Gospel-Story Sermons," etc.

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TO

MR. AND MRS. FINLEY H. LLOYD

WITH PLEASANT MEMORIES OF

"ELFIN CAMP"

FOREWORD.

PASSING north through the Canadian vacation country, one comes to a sort of height of land where the waters that flow east into the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario cease to flow, and one sees the western current begin and later enjoys those fine rivers that empty into the Georgian Bay. For a while the traveller pauses to think of the strangeness of the situation, but as he travels on he remembers that the waters of the Bay, the River, and the Lake very soon mingle and become one in their outward and onward flow to the great sea.

And so all truth finds its way out into life and not the least of the pleasures of the ministry is to discover that truth embodied in a tale to please the children overflows to the refreshment and enrichment of the children's friends. The imagination is the highest faculty we have and in that magic world heaven comes down our souls to meet.

Jesus never failed to appeal to the imagination, and the best of all nature story-sermons are the story-sermons of the Gospels. He understood children and He knew nature like a book. The wild-flowers and the birds, the sunrise and the sunset, the winds and the waves, the green grass,

and the golden grain were all His familiar friends, and nearly all His parables are nature story-sermons.

If there is any virtue and if there is any praise in this attempt at nature story-sermon telling, the credit must be given to the children themselves, and their generous appreciation. I must also, in all honesty say that I owe much to Sir J. Arthur Thomson's "The Outline of Science," and any reader of those suggestive volumes will easily detect the indebtedness.

H. T. K.

"Elfin Camp"

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I

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

"The Lord God is a sun."—Ps. 84: 11

THE Bible tells us that God is like the sun. "The Lord God is a sun." If you take the Hymnal, and look among the hymns you love you will find the thought repeated, again and again, "Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear," "As the sun doth daily rise," "Sun of our life, thy quickening ray," "Great sun of righteousness, arise." The sun is so full of light, so bright, so warm, so beautiful, it is little wonder the sun reminds us of God.

How far away the sun is! Once I saw an automobile travel 100 miles an hour. It was out at Indianapolis on the great speedway. No! I was not at the races. I was at the General Assembly. Now, if you can imagine that automobile, not going around in a circle but travelling straight on and on, going day and night, every day, Saturday afternoons and Sundays, going on and on, 100 miles an hour for more than 100 years, it would arrive at last at the sun.

How great is the sun! It would take more than a hundred worlds as big as ours to make one sun. And how great is God. He made the sun and all the stars. There is nothing in the world so great

as God. "To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking."

How bright the sun is! It scatters the night and chases away the darkness. How bright and beautiful God is! In him is light. The sun sends out great flames of light reaching 500,000 miles high, and the light of the sun warms this cold world of ours. They tell us there are "spots" in the sun, great dark spots, thousands of miles across, but there is no shadow of darkness about God.

"Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch, Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine."

How near the sun is! We think it is far away, millions of miles away, and yet the sun is here, at our side, shining, among the flowers, in our homes, in the faces of little children, in the eyes of those we love. The sun is so near you can almost hold it in your hand and look at it. We know the sun. We know what it is. We know what is in it. We know there is iron and copper and zinc and soda and magnesia in the sun. How do we know that? Because the sun comes right down and kisses the flowers and the faces of little children, and wise men take a

sunbeam and make it tell them its wonderful secrets. How near God is and how good He is. He comes to us in Jesus, the light of the world, and Jesus tells us all we know about God.

There is an old, old story in an old, old book called the Koran, that tells how away back in the beginning of history Abraham found the true God. And this is the story. One night in his far away heathen home Abraham was sitting watching the darkness drift down from the hills. As he watched he saw a star away behind the hills. He said, "This is my Lord. He is so bright, so beautiful." Then he watched and waited, and the moon came up, and he said, "This is my Lord." Through the long, dark night he watched and as the moon grew brighter and brighter he said, "Verily, I will follow my Lord in the right way." But as he watched the East was filled with glory and the great sun came up, and he said, "This is my Lord. How great and wonderful he is! The sun is greater than earth, or star, or moon. Through the long day he watched and in the evening the great sun went down behind a dark cloud, and he said, "Oh, my soul, I am done with these things. I turn my face from star and moon and sun to Him who hath made them all, to God who made heaven and earth." Let us, too, turn our faces towards God and say:

"Great Sun of Righteousness, arise;
Bless the dark world with heavenly light:
Thy gospel makes the simple wise,
Thy laws are pure, Thy judgments right."

II

COUNTING THE STARS

"He telleth the number of the stars."—Ps. 147:4

DO you think you could do that? Did you ever try to count the stars? I have. When I was a boy in Canada, where the stars twinkle and shine so clearly, we used to watch for the first star, and the first one who saw it would say:

"Star light, star bright,
First star I've seen to-night."

Then we would see who could count the stars as they appeared. One, two, four, five, seven, eight, ten, twenty, fifty, eighty, and in a little while we all would be lost, both in arithmetic and in wonder.

They call a man who watches and studies the stars an astronomer, and the astronomers have tried to count the stars, and partly by counting, and partly by guessing they tell us there must be between 2,000 and 3,000 millions of stars and each one is different, for "one star differeth from another star in glory."

We cannot count the stars, but God can. He counts them all and names them, for He made them and the stars are not little tiny sparks of

fire, but great wonderful worlds. The great sun that lights and warms our world is just a star, and a little star. Every star we see in the sky is a sun, hundreds of times bigger than our sun. It is because they are so far away that they look so tiny and so small. Some of the stars in the Milky Way are a hundred thousand trillion miles away. Think of a hundred thousand trillion miles. Try and write out a hundred thousand trillion. You put down the figure 1, then you write 100, then 100,000, then 100,000,000, then you write 100,000,000,000, then you write a hundred thousand trillion like this, 100,000,000,000,000,000; and that is the distance some of the stars in the Milky Way are from our sun.

The light that travels from some of these far-away stars takes millions of years to travel to our earth, and light travels fast, 186,000 miles a second. No wonder we like to look up into the sky on a clear cool night and say:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

"When the blazing sun is set,
And the grass with dew is wet,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night."

Stars, just like boys and girls, are different. Each has its own way, and its own light. There are white stars, and yellow stars, and red stars. You have seen a white hot iron, and you know

that when it begins to cool it gets yellow and then it gets red, and then it gets black. That is the way with stars, and perhaps the hottest stars are white. I do not know, but I like to think that just as God counts the stars and names them so he calls every boy and girl by name and cares for each one. We live in a big world but God is greater than sun and moon and stars.

The Bible calls Jesus a star. It gives Him a star's name. It calls him "the bright and morning star." The morning star leads the world into the light of the new day and so Jesus leads us. The sailor is guided over the trackless sea by the stars. The traveller over the desert picks his path by the help of some star, so we too find our way to God by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

There is a story of a young girl who had lost her way. She was lost not in the forest, or on the sea, but right in her own home. She had lost the way to peace, to happiness, and to a quiet heart. One night she had a dream. She was in a deep, deep pit, and there were no steps, no rope, nor ladder. She gave herself up for lost and then falling on her knees and looking up she saw a piece of blue sky and one star. When she saw the star she began to rise. It seemed so strange that she said, "Who is lifting me?" and looking down she found herself at the bottom. Again she saw the star and began to rise, but looked again to see who was lifting her and found herself at the bottom. A third time she fixed her eyes on the shining star, and kept looking until

she found herself lifted out of the deep pit, and she was safe. Then she awoke and said, "I see it all now. I am not to look at myself, but at Jesus, 'the bright and morning star.'"

When Sir Harry Lauder was in America he was walking with a father and a little boy down one of the streets of New York. It was in the days of the great war, when service flags with a star were hung in the windows. The little lad loved to point them out. "Look, father," he would say, "there's a home that has given a son to the war." "Look, father, there's another star." "Look, father, there are two stars." Then the lad, looking up at the Evening Star that had appeared in the sky, said, "And look, father, God too must have given a son, for there is a star in His window." Yes, God so loved the world that He gave—Jesus.

III

DUST

"Dust thou art."—GEN. 3 : 19

THE Bible tells us very plainly that our bodies are made of dust. God made man of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. We do not like to think we are made out of dust. We like to think we are made out of sunshine and rainbows, and if there is any dust about us, it must be golden star dust.

I heard once of a dear old Scotchwoman who had always refused to have her picture taken. Many old ladies, you know, are queer, especially Scotch old ladies. Her family, however, urged her to have her photograph taken so they could send it to one of her sons who lived in America, and she consented. When the first proof was received she looked at it long and silently and then without a word set out for the studio. "Is that me?" she said to the photographer. "Yes, madam," he said. "And is it like me?" she added. "Yes, madam, it is a speaking likeness." Then said the old Scotch woman, "Well, if that's so, it's a humbling sight."

We laugh at the dear old lady, for we know she was wrong, for there is nothing lovelier in

the world than just a fine, sweet, thought-ennobled face of a mother or a grandmother.

And what a wonderful thing dust is! It is alive with mystery before which wise men dream and wonder. To a wise man who knows, "the very dust is dear." It is a living thing, and out of it the world has been made, and scientists tell us that we owe our beautiful sunsets and our refreshing rain to the dust that floats in the upper air.

We are apt to think the only value dust has is to make work, but it is not so. Dust is useful. A great scientist once wrote a book which he called "The Wonderful Century." The Wonderful Century was of course the nineteenth century which includes all the years between 1800 and 1900. In this book he wrote about some of the marvellous things discovered during those years and one of the chapters is about Dust, and among other things he said, "It is doubtful whether we could even live without dust. To the presence of dust we owe the clouds, the mists, the rains." If it were not for the dust instead of soft showers and refreshing rains we would have water spouts and terrible torrents. It all seems strange, but true things are often strange, and sometimes little things are really big things.

A great man by the name of John Ruskin once took a handful of mud from the road of a great city. It was just a handful of dirty dust moistened with water. This wise man then divided the mud into four parts, clay, soot, sand, and

water. Then he told the people who were listening to him that if the clay were left alone for thousands or millions of years it would, under certain conditions, become a beautiful sapphire. The sand, he said, in the same strange way would be changed into a precious opal. The soot, the blackest of things, would in time become a brilliant diamond and the water could easily be changed into a pearly dewdrop or a snow crystal.

God can change the meanest thing into a priceless gem, and He can so transform us that we can become like Him. We are made of the dust of the field but we are also made in the image of God.

"Life is real; life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal!
'Dust thou art, to dust returnest'
Was not spoken of the soul."

The Apostle John said: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

IV

A CHRISTMAS STORY-SERMON

"I am the light of the world."—JOHN 8:12

JESUS is the Light of the World. There is nothing better than light. Think for a minute about the things that are connected with light. Light and heat go together. The great sun that lights the world and turns darkness into day also warms the earth and makes it bring forth its harvests of golden grain and precious fruit.

Light and power go together. Did you know that Niagara Falls is one of the greatest power plants in the world? Well, if you go there to see that great wonder of nature you must see also the wonderful power houses along the shore where the water turns the wheels and the power generated by the wheels goes to light the cities of Niagara Falls and Buffalo and Toronto and drives the trolley lines in a hundred cities and towns. Yes, power and light go together.

Light and health go together. The sun is a great physician. It heals. It drives away disease. It purifies air and water. Dr. S. Hall Young, the veteran missionary to Alaska, told me once that for twenty years in Alaska he had never had the funeral of a little child. The clear air, the pure light, kept disease away. Men who study such

things tell us there is not a single disease germ, not one microbe, on the top of Mount Blanc in Switzerland.

When Jesus came into the world He came to be the Light of the World. The Wise Men were guided to Him by the light of the star. He is the living Light that heals and saves.

It was away back in 1353, six hundred years ago, and a terrible plague known as the Black Death had carried off men, women, and children by the thousands. People fled in terror from towns and cities and lived alone in strange places. Friends separated from each other and families shut themselves in their own homes and refused entrance to all who came. Fear made people more like animals of the night than like the children of the day. They called the disease the Black Death and it certainly drove all the light out of the land.

The Black Death had driven all light and life from the streets of the little village of Goldberg in Germany. The town looked as if it had been struck with death. Christmas Eve came, and the city was silent as the grave. A man who had been in hiding, believing that he alone was left alive, unbarred his door as Christmas Eve sped on to Christmas morning, and came out into the silent street. The stars were shining bright as if all were well, and knowing it was Christmas morn, and forgetting the dread months that had passed away, he began to sing the old familiar Christmas song:

"To us this day is born a child.
God with us;
His mother is a Virgin mild;
God with us;
God with us; against us who dare be?"

He sang the first verse and then a door was opened, and a man joined him, and together they sang the second verse. Together they walked through the silent street and were joined by others who came out of their hiding places, until there were twenty-five—some of them women and children—and they sang the Christmas song until they had new hope and courage and the Christmas light came into the sky. That was the end of the Black Death. Either it had spent itself, or God's goodness had brought forth new courage in the hearts of those twenty five, for not one of them died of the Plague and for hundreds of years after, the people of the village always met together on Christmas Eve at midnight and at two o'clock Christmas morning marched through the streets singing the same old Christmas hymn:

"To us this day is born a child
God with us;
His mother is a Virgin mild;
God with us;
God with us; against us who dare be?"

Yes, light and health belong together. When the Christmas child was born they called His name Jesus, which means Saviour. He is the light that saves. He is the light that drives away darkness and doubt and death. When Christmas came

the world began to sing and it has been singing ever since:

"Joy to the world; the Lord is come."

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." He also said, "Ye are the light of the world." The Christmas light shines because of Jesus, but it shines also because of those who walk in the Gospel light. At Port Maitland a great pier runs out into Lake Erie and on this pier at night there burn two lights, one near the end and one near the shore. The one at the end is called the Light-house light and the one near the shore is called the Range light, for by means of it the ships know not only where the harbor is but the way into the harbor. Before the Range light was placed on the pier a great ship missed the harbor and ran upon the reef. Jesus is the Great light, but we too are the range lights giving direction to those who wish to find the heavenly harbor and the Christmas spirit with its joy and good cheer; its glad gifts and helpful service is the way in which we obey the Master's command, "Let your light so shine."

V

A DEAD WORLD

"Fair as the moon."—Song of Songs 6: 10

THE other day I was visiting a little friend who had been ill for fourteen long months, through two winters and one summer. He had gone to bed near Christmas and had been a little invalid all that year, and through the next Christmas. His name is Frederick. He has a sister just his own age to the very day, and her name is Florence. Florence went to school and learned to write and add and subtract and do other queer things. Frederick stayed in bed, kept very quiet and read. He was only seven, but he read all sorts of books, and when he could not read others read to him, his nurse, his father, or his mother, or Billy or Betty, and he came to know a lot of history and science and fairy tales.

One day when I was telling him about the big world outside, and the coming of spring with its buds and leaves and flowers he chuckled and said, "Some day this world will be just like the moon." What do you think of that? What did he mean? I thought perhaps he had been reading Robert Louis Stevenson who said that

> "The moon has a face like the clock in the hall
> It shines on thieves on the garden wall."

Then I thought perhaps it was Mother Goose he was thinking of:

"The man in the moon
Came tumbling down
And asked the way to Norwich.
He went by the south
And burnt his mouth
With supping cold pease-porridge."

I soon knew, however, that he was not thinking about fancies and fairies, but about facts, and I said, "Why do you think so?" "Well," said he in a wise sort of way, "don't you know the moon is dead and some day this world will be dead just like the moon." Of course I knew that. Everybody knows that. The moon is dead. Nothing lives in the moon. Nothing ever happens there. No storms, no lightning, no noise, no dust, no twilight, no blue sky, no twinkling stars, nothing happens in the moon. There is no life, no air there, and the sky is as black as ink. It has no weather. It is a dead world.

No wonder "the man in the moon has a crick in his back. Whee! Whim! Ain't you sorry for him?" Perhaps this is why people have always thought the moon harmed people and made them go out of their heads, as we say. Do you remember the Psalm that says, "The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night?" You can have a moonstroke, as well as a sunstroke. All dead things are bad, and a dead world like the moon may have a bad influence on people, especially on young people who stay out late at night.

I said, "Yes, the moon is dead, a dead, dead world, but how beautiful it is and how wonderful it is at night. How is that? If it is dead how is it so full of light?" And I repeated the verse:

"Moon, so round and yellow,
Looking from on high,
How I love to see you
Shining in the sky.
Oft and oft I wonder,
When I see you there,
How they get to light you,
Hanging in the air."

Then Frederick turned over and said with a laugh, "Don't you know? Why, it's the sun that makes the moon beautiful. The moon is dead, but the sun shines on it, and makes it shine." And then I thought that we, too, are something like the moon, sort of dead and dull and useless, until Jesus, the great sun of our life, shines upon us and lights up our lives. The only way for us to be bright and useful is to have Jesus shine upon us. If we stay near Him we will be like Him.

Frederick is well now and lives out in a real live world and some day when I see him I am going to preach this story-sermon to him and then read and explain to him this sermon-story in rhyme:

"A Persian fable says: One day
A wanderer found a lump of clay
So redolent of sweet perfume,
Its odours scented all the room.
'What art thou?' was his quick demand;
'Art thou some gem from the Samarkand,
Or Spikenard in this rude disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?'

'Nay! I am but a lump of clay.'
'Then whence this wondrous sweetness—say?'
'Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.'"

Perhaps that verse of poetry is rather hard for little children to understand, but its meaning is very simple. It means that just as a piece of clay which has no sweetness in itself may become fragrant by being in the same place with a rose, so we too may become sweet and lovely by living in the presence of Jesus. The sweetness of the rose sweetens the clay, and the love and beauty of our Lord make us kind and sweet also. I am sure Frederick will understand both the story and the sermon.

VI

THE GREATEST CRADLE IN THE WORLD

"The sea is his."—Ps. 95 : 5

CRADLES are out of fashion in these days. Babies are no longer in need of cradles. They need, not cradles, but cold dark silent rooms, perfectly good old fashioned beds, and to be left entirely alone to think and to meditate and not to cry.

Somehow I like the old way. I know it's not the best way, but still it is best for song and story and when you come to think of it, nature too, likes a cradle and has no idea of giving up to our new-fangled modern notions.

What is a beautiful valley lying between hills and mountains but a cradle, soft and green, in which sleep fields of golden grain and pretty villages, and what are the trees of the forests and the streets but cradles, rocked by the wind. You remember the lullaby song:

"Rock-a-bye baby
In the tree top,
When the bough bends
The cradle will rock."

But the greatest cradle in the whole wide world is the sea. The deep, dark, boundless sea is the

greatest cradle in the world. The very first bed God ever made was the sea and there the first life was cradled. What a cradle it is! How great it is! It rocks from East to West, from shore to shore, and ships and islands and continents sleep in it. You know what the old song says:

"Rocked in the cradle of the deep
I lay me down in peace to sleep;
Secure I rest upon the wave,
For Thou, O Lord! hast power to save.
I know Thou wilt not slight my call,
For Thou dost mark the sparrow's fall;
And calm and peaceful shall I sleep,
Rocked in the cradle of the deep."

How cold it is! The icy waters of the far North and of the far South slip down into its depths. How deep it is! You could never reach down into it with your arms. The highest mountain in the world could lie down in it and be lost from sight. How heavy is its covering! I suppose that is because it is so cold. Do you know if you were to lie down at the bottom of this great cradle you would have to carry about 250 tons of watery bed covers. Think of that!

Away down at the bottom of the deep, cold cradle of the sea, it is dark and still. There is no noise there, no light ever gets down into that quiet chamber. Occasionally a little animal with a little phosphorescent light passes by to see that all is well and then everything is dark and silent again.

And yet down there in that great cradle of the sea little animals live and thrive, fed by the sea

dust that filters down from above, for the sea is God's cradle and even there God cares for His creatures. In one of the Psalms we read:

> "If I take the wings of the morning,
> And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
> Even there shall thy hand lead me,
> And thy right hand shall hold me."

If He cares for the fish of the deep, deep sea, will He not care for us?

There is no place in all the world where God cannot come to His children. When a great hero of the sea was caught in a terrible storm and all the crew was in a panic of fear, He calmly said, "We are as near God on the sea as on the land." How true! And, after all, the greatest cradle in the world is not the trees of the forest, or the great deep silent sea, but the arms of our Heavenly Father. Where in the Bible will you find it said that "The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"?

VII

WHAT THE BELLS SAY

"A golden bell."—Ex. 28:34

MORE than a hundred years ago a sailing ship far out on the sea, a hundred miles from shore, heard the sound of church bells. It was Sunday morning and the bells were ringing, calling people to church. They seemed to say:

"Come when I call,
Both great and small."

At first those upon the vessel thought it was only fancy, for they were far from shore. There was only one place on the ship where the bells could be heard and that was before the bulging main sail, and there the sound of the church bells could be clearly heard, calling, calling, to worship and prayer.

Months passed and the vessel one day sailed into the port of San Salvador and on inquiry the sailors learned that at the exact time when the bells were heard upon the ship far out at sea, the church bells of the cathedral were ringing. It was a great mystery to the sailors, but it is easy for us to understand. In our day when we know how easily the air carries the voice over

land and sea we can understand how the sound of the bells could be caught by the bulging sail.

What a pleasing sound it is to hear the call of the "church going bell." In old England where every village church has a bell you will find each of them has a motto graven in the metal. Some of these mottoes are interesting. Here is one that says:

"Come away,
Make no delay."

Another says:

"Come and pray,
Hear and obey."

Sometimes the bell is vain and the motto reads:

"I am a pretty bell,
That you all may see."

And sometimes the bell is modest and sensitive and sometimes they tell the praises of those who made them:

"Our merry bell is mainly due
To Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Carew."

Here is a complaining and grumbling motto:

"Our tone would have been made deeper
If contributions had been greater."

What strange messages for church bells! Some of them are vain, some foolish, some selfish. A

church bell should send out one clear note. It should say, like the bells of Bath,

"Let Christ be known around,
And loved where'er we sound.
Then shall true joys abound.
Before Him lowly fall,
Where'er we lift our call
And praise Him Lord of all."

There is one bell, a very little bell, that rings sometimes very quietly and sometimes sounds a loud alarm and we can never get away from its sound. Do you know its name? Yes, it is Conscience. Sometimes it rings a merry, merry tune, and sometimes it sounds a warning. The teacher examining a Sunday School said, "Who can tell me what Conscience is?" One of the big boys said, "It is too big a word for me." Then the teacher said, "Did you ever feel anything inside you that said, 'Do this,' 'Shun that,' 'You ought to have done this,' 'You should not have said that'?" "Oh, yes," said George, "that is Jesus ringing a bell in our hearts." And George was right. Better than the call of the church bell in the steeple is the call of Conscience which is the voice of Jesus, guiding us in ways of pleasantness and in paths of peace.

VIII

THE UNSEEN COMRADE

"Lo, I see four men."—DAN. 3:25

ONCE upon a time there lived in the far away land of Babylon a great king. His name was Nebuchadnezzar. What a terrible name for a man and it must have been more terrible for a boy. He was a great, strong king, and he loved his own way. One day he set up in Babylon a great image or idol of gold, and ordered every one to worship it. Great plans were made. It was arranged that at a certain time when the people heard the sound of "the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer" that everybody should fall down and worship the great idol of gold. If any should refuse to worship he would be cast into a burning, fiery furnace.

When the music sounded all the people fell upon their faces. Did I say all the people? I was wrong. There were three young men who refused to bow before the idol. They were Hebrew young men with names as strange as the name of Nebuchadnezzar: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They worshipped the living and true God, and Him only, and they refused to worship anything made of gold. So they were taken and bound and cast into the furnace of fire. The soldiers thought

they would immediately perish, but when they looked again into the furnace they saw them walking unharmed in the midst of the fire, and the strangest of all strange things they saw. They saw not three men but four. They came running to the king. The king himself went to the furnace and looking in said, "Lo I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." God Himself had entered into the fiery furnace and kept His loyal servants safe from harm.

That is an old, old story. But I can tell you a new, new story just like it. It happened not very long ago. A man with another strange name—his name was Shackleton—set out in a great strong ship called the "Endurance" to find his way to the South Pole. His ship was crushed to splinters in the ice and he and his companions nearly lost their lives. Leaving the wrecked ship they made their way across ice and snow and sea to South Georgia Island, and there Shackleton and two of his companions, Worsley and Crean, made their way across the Island, a perilous march of thirty-six hours, over ice mountains, down dangerous chasms, and once they let themselves over a thirty-foot waterfall by a rope and finally came to the whaling station. For a year and a half they had been in the lonely ice world and the first to meet these three strange looking men were two little boys belonging to the station, who fled from them in terror.

When they had been warmed and washed and clothed, after their long and lonely journey, Sir Ernest Shackleton said to his companions, "It seemed to me often that we were four, not three." His companion Worsley said later, "Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us." And Crean confessed that he, too, had felt the presence of the great unseen Companion.

So you see whether it is in the fire, or in the ice fields, God cares for those who trust Him, and always with us is our unseen Comrade, who says:

"Fear not
For I have redeemed thee;
I have called thee by thy name,
Thou art mine.
When thou passest
Through the waters
I will be with thee:
And through the rivers
They shall not overflow thee;
When thou walkest through the fire,
Thou shalt not be burned;
Neither shall the flame
Kindle upon thee,
For I am Jehovah thy God
The Holy One of Israel;
Thy Saviour."

IX

THE TEST

"Try me."—Ps. 139: 23

THE other day I went with a friend through the great Carnegie steel mills where men were busy at the fires and furnaces and forges making steel and turning it out into rails and beams and rods and great sheets of steel. It was very interesting and very noisy.

But the most interesting thing to me was not the fire, nor the forge, nor the furnace, but what I saw in a little quiet room fitted up with strange cold looking machines, each run by two young men. This was what they called the testing room.

From every furnace a sample of steel was taken. A piece about as long as my arm or less, and as wide and thick as my four fingers. This piece of steel was gripped at each end by one of these machines and pulled or stretched, just as you would stretch a piece of rubber. You could see the steel as it was drawn becoming thinner and thinner until suddenly it snapped. Each of these little pieces of pure steel stood the test up to about 56,000 pounds pressure, and then it broke. The men then knew where to put the great pieces of steel to which the piece that had been tested belonged. If it stood a high pressure they put the

steel into railroad trains and automobiles where safety was required and if it stood only a low pressure they used it for something less worthy.

We, too, are tested. We are tested out in the great world, at home, at school, everywhere we are being tested and tried and if we prove worthy we are given a place of honour and usefulness. The Bible tells us over and over again that God tests and tries us:

"The righteous God trieth the hearts."

"Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts."

"When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold."

"Thou, O God, hast tried us as silver is tried."

Shortly after the time of Jesus there lived a great and good man by the name of John Chrysostom. He was called "the golden-mouthed" preacher. He was a great man and a great preacher of the Gospel. The Roman Emperor ordered him to give up his Christian faith or he would be exiled. Chrysostom replied, "Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house; thou canst not banish me." Then said the emperor, "I will slay thee." Chrysostom replied, "Nay, but thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away thy treasure," said the emperor. "Nay," said Chrysostom, "but thou canst not, for I have none that thou knowest of. My treasure is in heaven." "Then," said the emperor, "I will drive thee from thy friends

and thou shalt have no friends left." "Nay," said this brave man, who was being tested and tried, "thou canst not, for I have a Friend from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee. There is nothing thou canst do to hurt me."

What a brave man he was, and how nobly he stood the test, and like Job came forth as gold. Let us make this text our prayer:

"Search me
O God
And know my heart;
Try me
And know my thoughts.
And see if there be any wicked way in me
And lead me in the way everlasting."

X

CAMOUFLAGE

"I shall seem to him as a deceiver."—GEN. 27: 12

CAMOUFLAGE! That is a big word. It is one of the words the war gave us. When I went to France the ship was camouflaged, that is, it was painted so as to hide it when it was on the sea. The guns were camouflaged, that is, they were covered with the branches of trees to make them look like the forest itself. The roads were camouflaged, that is, they were made to look, not like roads, but like the fields, so the enemy would not know.

There is a wonderful story of camouflage in the Bible. It is the story of Jacob. You remember his mother wanted him to receive the blessing of his old blind father. So she dressed him up to make him feel like Esau. Esau was a hairy man, and she put skins of kids on Jacob's neck and hands and when he went to seek his father's blessing Isaac, his father, said, "The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob." That was camouflage.

It is a bad thing to try to cheat and deceive and betray. You remember what Alice said to the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland." She said, "Oh, I know it's a vegetable; it doesn't look like

one, but it is." And the Duchess said, "I quite agree with you. The moral of that is, 'Be what you seem.'" That is a good motto. "Be what you seem." There is so much sham and pretence in the world. There are so many imitations of real things. Let us be real and be what we seem to be.

But there is a good kind of camouflage. The world is full of it. We learned camouflage from nature. The lizard in the grass is not seen because it, too, is green. The snake, too, we miss, because it is just the color of the meadow, or the soil. The spotted leopard in the jungle is perfectly camouflaged. The polar bear in the great white wilderness of the North is also white, as white as snow. And the animals and birds change their colour with the seasons, and with the soil. Sometimes the rabbit and the fox are white when winter comes; and the birds hide themselves in colour like their own. There is an old tale of a chameleon that when chased by a dog suddenly turned around, opened its great pink mouth, and changed colour so quickly that the dog was scared nearly to death and ran for its life. They say that once a chameleon, one of these little animals that change their colour so easily, was put on a brown rug and became brown, on a green rug it was green, on a blue rug it was blue, and when put on a Persian rug it died. Of course that is a foolish tale, but animals find safety and security in adapting themselves to the colour of their surroundings.

We, too, live in a difficult and dangerous world. It is not easy to escape all our enemies. Sometimes we have to hide ourselves in some safe place. We read in one of the Psalms that in the time of trouble God will hide us, and one man offers a prayer that God will "hide him under the shadow of his wings." That is the best place to hide in time of danger.

"Rock of ages, cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee."

During the war I remember going out one dark moonless night up to the front line trenches. The road came to an end in the woods. There in the side of a hill in a little camouflaged chapel we found some of our American soldiers. It was a little shrine which they had built, covered with branches of trees and so camouflaged it could not be seen. There they felt secure as in the presence of God. No enemy can find us, if we hide ourselves with God. Martin Luther used to say, "If any one should come and knock at my heart and say, 'Who lives here?' I would say, 'Not Martin Luther, but Jesus Christ lives here,' for Martin Luther's life is hid with Christ in God."

XI

LIVING GRAIN

"A grain of wheat."—JOHN 12:24

DID you ever hear the story of the two bags of grain? It is an old Eastern story and is like one of the parables Jesus was fond of telling. Once upon a time an Eastern prince took a long journey and left with his two friends two sacks of corn to be kept till he returned. After a long time he came back and said, "Where is my corn?" The first friend led him to his cellar, and showed him the bag of corn, all soft and rotten and useless. "Where is my corn?" he asked the second, and his friend led him out to the farm and showed him a great field of waving corn, "That is your corn," he said. Then the prince told the first friend he could have the useless corn in the cellar and to the second he said, "When you reap the harvest give me back one sack and keep all the rest." Which friend was wise?

If we would keep grain we must sow it in the fields. Old grain will die after a while.

Perhaps you have read stories to the effect that grain found in the wrappings of mummies, three or four or five thousand years old, if planted will live again and grow. I have read such stories, with exact dates, and wondered how they could

be told over and over again, for I know that old grain found with mummies thousands of years old does not grow.

One day I asked a friend who knows all about such things. His name is Dr. Coulter and he teaches Botany and other such subjects to the students of the University of Chicago, and writes about flowers and fruits, and wheat and corn.

He told me this story. Years ago, when the first mummies were found in Egypt—you know what a mummy is—a wise German professor took some of the seeds of grain found in these tombs and planted them in his garden. Every morning he went out to see if the corn had sprouted and each morning he came back into the house shaking his head and saying, "No, there is no sign of life." Days went by, and he was quite disappointed and ready to admit that old, old grain, thousands of years old, would not grow again.

The German professor had two boys, two small boys, and there is nothing too hard or too difficult for two small boys. Seeing their father's disappointment they set to work to cheer his heart, and to cause the old Egyptian grain to grow. So they found some real fresh wheat and sowed it in the garden where their father had sowed the old grain and pretty soon it sprouted and the green blades came up through the ground and the German professor rubbed his hands and laughed and said, "True, the old grain grows again." Then he sat down and wrote out the story and it was printed in a German paper.

Little by little, however, the true story leaked out, for the boys told what they had done to a friend of their father. He was disturbed. Would he keep quiet, or would he tell the professor? He decided to tell and so their father had to write to the same paper and deny his first story, and say that old grain, found in the cases of mummies, thousands of years old, does not grow. But the truth has never caught up with the first lie, and it is still told that grain never loses its life.

But it does. Grain does die. The only way to keep grain living is to sow it, plant it in the field. That is what Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Remember, then, the story of the prince and the two sacks of corn. What we keep we lose. What we sow we keep. If we wish to be rich we must sow the seed of good deeds, kind words, and loving thoughts.

Remember, too, we can only get a living harvest from living grain. We must not trust in the past but in the present. We, indeed, reap from the sowing of our parents and the great and the good of the past, but if others are also to reap a golden harvest we ourselves must sow living seed.

"Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living present;
Heart within, and God o'er head."

XII

THE HOME OF THE WHEAT

"It may chance of wheat."—1 Cor. 15:37

DID you ever see a field of golden grain out on the western prairie? How wonderful it is! How wide and long the field is! There are acres and acres and miles and miles of waving wheat soon to be cut and then threshed and then ground up into fine white flour. It is one of the most beautiful sights in the world. And how useful, for all these great gardens of wheat are to be turned into bread. Where did the beautiful wheat come from? We know now that wheat is very, very old. We are told that wheat was harvested ten thousand years ago. They grew wheat and ate bread, but not beautiful bread like ours, away back in Egypt and Greece and Babylon. Last year in America there were 300,000,000 bushels of what is called Marquis wheat harvested. This is the wonderful spring wheat which grows in Canada and the United States. Now the wonderful thing is that all this mighty harvest of wheat came from a single grain of wheat planted in a garden at Ottawa in Canada by Dr. Charles E. Sanders in 1903. This is the way wheat multiplies, in 1903 one grain and in 1923, twenty years after, 300,000,000 bushels. How many loaves of

bread would 300,000,000 bushels of fine hard wheat make?

But where did that one single grain come from? Where is the home of this great bread-making plant? Well, we are told that its home is on Mt. Hermon, and along the Jordan in the Holy Land. For this reason Palestine is called the "cradle of the cereals." There it still grows wild and it has been taken and cultivated and developed, and now we have our wheat and our beautiful bread. This is very interesting. Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life, and we have found that out of the same country that gave us Jesus there has come also the bread that feeds our bodies. From the same Holy Land has come the bread for the soul and the bread for the body. And both have come from God our Father, who cares for all His children. Of Jesus, the living bread, we think when we say:

"Break thou the Bread of Life,
Dear Lord, to me
As Thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea."

Of the great harvest wheat fields we think when we say:

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father's will."

And so we pray:

"Give us this day,
Our daily bread."

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XIII

SHOOTING STARS

"Like wandering stars."—JUDE 13

DID you ever see a star shoot straight across the sky? How swift and straight it goes. I was in France on Easter Day when the great German gun fired a shell into Paris, seventy miles away, and killed many people. But that is nothing compared to the distance travelled by a shooting star.

What is a shooting star? It is a great piece of stone or iron or metal, travelling through the air at the rate of twenty or thirty miles a second. When it gets about seventy-five miles from the earth, the air puts on the brakes, as it were, and the great mass begins to glow and burn. You know how brakes on a train or a car can make the wheels hot, and perhaps set them on fire. So the air acts as a brake upon the falling rock, or star, as we call it, and it takes fire and when it is about twenty miles from the earth it just burns up and disappears in a sort of fiery vapour. We are told that from ten to one hundred millions of these shooting stars are burned up and cremated every day. Some weigh an ounce, some a ton, but almost every one is caught in the air which, like a torpedo net, protects our world.

Sometimes a great many of these wandering stars are drawn into a group, and this swarm of shooting stars is called a comet. They are caught by the attractive power of the sun and made to travel round his throne. They travel so fast that a long thin tail is formed. The great comet of 1843 had a tail 200,000,000 miles long, and travelled around the sun 300 or 400 miles a second. No wonder we are half afraid of comets and shooting stars that wander like lost worlds in the upper air. The stars that help us stay in their places and keep their course. This is why we think of them as singing as they shine. Our world with its sun and moon and stars is so beautiful because they are obedient to the will of God, which is the law of their life, and our lives will be beautiful and useful only as we, too, are obedient to our Heavenly Father.

In an old cemetery where there are many old graves and many strange mottoes on the stones, there is one which I like to think about. It is very, very old, and weather-worn, and there are just three words on it. One of the words is the name of a little boy, "Freddie," and under his name these two words, "Yes, Father." It is a good thing to say "Yes" to God. There is no better motto than that. It is a good motto for school, and home, and church.

Think of the men in the Bible who are like shooting stars, wandering from God, and disappearing in the darkness.

Cain was the first shooting star.

Lot was a shooting star.

Saul, the first king, was a shooting star.

So was Samson, and so was Solomon.

Judas was a shooting star.

So was Demas. Do you know about Demas?

Then name over all the wonderful fixed stars in the Bible. Men like Abraham, and Moses, and David and Paul, and Peter and John, and women like Ruth and Esther and Mary and Dorcas. Do you know about Dorcas? Shooting stars leave their places and fall into the night. The stars that are obedient keep their appointed courses,

> "And utter forth a glorious voice,
> Forever singing as they shine,
> 'The hand that made us is Divine.'"

Obedience is the path to joy and peace.

XIV

FLOWERS AND PRAYERS

"A sweet savour."—GEN. 8:21

FLOWERS speak a language of their own. The red rose speaks of love and the poet sings about it in beautiful words:

> "Oh, my love is like a red, red rose,
> That's newly sprung in June."

The white rose and lily speak of purity, and we talk of one who "bears the white flower of a blameless life." The carnation reminds us of mother and Mother's Day, and the four leafed clover we say speaks of "good luck" and the hedge rose with its thorns says, "Beware." The poppy makes us think of the soldiers who lie sleeping in Flanders Fields between the white crosses row on row:

> "In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
> Between the crosses, row on row,
> That mark our place; and in the sky
> The larks, still bravely singing, fly,
> Scarce heard amid the guns below."

There is an old notion that prayers are like flowers. I have often wondered why prayers and flowers belong together and now I understand. It is because of their beauty, especially the beauty

of their perfume, which ascends from both flowers and prayers. There is a fragrance that belongs only to flowers and prayers. The Bible tells us that prayers are sweet to God. In great cathedrals sweet smelling incense is used to suggest that prayer is pleasing to God. Like prayer it ascends. It is fragrant. It is sweet. But I like to think that the sweetness of prayer is more like the fragrance of beautiful flowers.

And perhaps this is the way to explain a beautiful old story. One night, when the birds were asleep and the moon was behind a thin, silvery cloud, a mother who was watching her little girl lying in her crib fell asleep herself and as she slept she dreamed a dream. She dreamed that she was in heaven and saw all the prayers come in and they came in as flowers come to the home on Easter Day or to the hospital when we are sick. The prayers came up to heaven like flowers and the angels carried them into a beautiful room to arrange them and to sort them. Some were in full bloom and some were only in bud. Sometimes there was a single flower and sometimes there were great clusters of them. Suddenly the angel paused and then picking up a delicate little rosebud, was about to leave the room, now so full of fragrance and loveliness. Holding up the little rosebud the angel said, "This is for the Master," and the mother said, "Whence is the rosebud? Who sent it? What is it?" Then the angel smiled and said, "Oh, knowest thou not? This is the first prayer of a little child." Then

the mother awoke and looked into the face of her little girl who had fallen asleep with a prayer upon her lips.

"The first prayer of a little child." That I think is the most beautiful prayer of all. Surely it is like a rosebud, in the Master's hand.

You know how eagerly we listen to a little child's first word and how we treasure it. Prayer is just speaking to God, and a little child's first prayer is the first word spoken to God and He listens for that first prayer just as a mother listens for and loves her child's first word.

XV

THE GREATEST MILL IN THE WORLD

"Out of their holes like worms."—MICAH 7:17

HERE is a riddle. What is the greatest mill in the world? I feel sure you can never guess it. Let us count over all the mills we know. First of all there is the mill where grain is ground into flour. We call it a flour mill or a grist mill, and we have all seen those great flour mills where harvest fields of wheat are ground up to make flour for bread. It was of the miller of such a mill that the old folks used to sing:

"There was a jolly miller once
Lived on the River Dee;
He worked and sang from morn till night,
No lark more blithe than he.

"And this the burden of his song
Forever used to be,
'I care for nobody, no, not I,
If no one cares for me.'"

He was a rather selfish, independent old miller, I guess. But a flour mill is not the greatest mill in the world.

Then there are great steel mills here in Pittsburgh that roar and flash and smoke and sometimes make noises like thunder and send out flames

like lightning. They line the banks of our great rivers for miles, but even they are not the greatest in the world.

The greatest mill in the world is quiet, and very still. It never thunders. It never roars. You could pass over it and never notice it. No, it is not a beehive, although that is a great mill, but it is not quiet and still, for bees buzz and fret and fume a great deal. No, it is not an ant hill, but you are getting nearer, "getting hot," as we say. An ant hill is a great mill, and it is quiet and silent and so busy that if you put a thermometer right into an ant hill you will find there is a rise in temperature on account of the work done in that little mill. Will you give up? You can never guess. Let me tell you.

Well, the greatest miller in the world is—a worm. Yes, an earthworm, what we call a fish-worm, a common angle-worm. It is the greatest miller in the world and the greatest mill is the soil where the earthworms work and burrow. If the earthworms did not work and keep on ploughing and cultivating the soil this earth of ours would be cold and hard and barren, the soil would become hard and cold as rock. It would be like baked clay, but the earthworms plough and cultivate and make it porous and loose, so that the rain can filter down, and the plants and vegetables can grow and take root. You never thought of that, did you? You never knew these little, insignificant, harmless, horrid worms were so useful. Well, that is just the mistake we often make.

We think we must be big, and great to be useful. Not at all. The little things are the most useful.

In an acre of land, a piece about as big as our church lot, a wise man counted 53,000 earthworms, and in a rich garden there would be over half a million. We are told that these worms pass ten tons an acre through their bodies and have been doing this for millions of years, grinding, ploughing, cultivating the soil and making it fit for things to grow in. You see then that the earthworms are our helpers, and though they are so little and so humble, yet they do very useful and necessary work. It is always so. Little things working together do great things.

Jesus said much about the value of little things. He said a cup of cold water given in His name was something done for Him. He said that any one who was faithful about little things would be faithful in great things. He praised the poor widow for giving two mites in the Temple offering. He tried to make us understand that the little things are after all the big things. Do you know that St. Paul's Cathedral in London, one of the most beautiful churches in the world, was built out of sixpences, little English pieces of money like our dimes? How was that? Well, when they decided to build that great and wonderful cathedral they placed a tax of sixpence on every ton of coal used in the land, and out of this tax the beautiful cathedral was built. Little things grow into big things. You do not need to wait until you can do some great and wonderful

thing. Some little word or act of love may grow into what will seem some day to be a miracle. Don't wait for the big things. Do beautiful little things now.

"If any little word of mine
May make a life the brighter,
If any little song of mine
May make a heart the lighter,
God help me speak that little word,
And take my bit of singing,
And drop it in some lonely vale,
To set the echoes ringing!

"If any little love of mine
May make a life the sweeter,
If any little care of mine
May make a friend's the fleeter,
If any lift of mine may ease
The burden of another,
God give me love, and care, and strength
To help my toiling brother!"

XVI

HABITS

"As His custom was."—LUKE 4:16

A HABIT, you know, is something you wear. A riding habit is what you wear when you ride a beautiful horse. It is something that exactly fits you, that belongs to you, and becomes you.

A little girl in trying to tell what habit is said it is your second self. And she was right. You can't get away from your habits any more than you can get away from yourself. Just think about it. If you take away the first letter you still have "a bit" left. If you take away the second letter there is still a "bit" left. If you take away the third letter you still have "it." Our habits are ourselves.

A good boy has good habits and a bad boy has bad habits. And our habits are made when we are very young. Our brains when we are little children are just like fluffy snow. You know how soft and smooth new fallen snow is. Then you see a pair of little feet running across the snow and you have footprints in the snow. Then those same little feet travel back over the same tracks and return and by and by there is a path

in the snow. Now thoughts and acts and words, repeated again and again make tracks in our brain and in our soul and these paths when they become well beaten are habits. Habits are the paths our thoughts and actions take.

Last summer at a farmhouse near my summer home in Canada I saw an interesting example of habit. My friend Mr. Cotter, whom his good wife calls "Sack," is the warden in the little church at Port Maitland. That is to say, he is the chief man, next to the minister, and watches over the church, takes up the collection, and keeps his eye on the preacher and his ears open to the preaching. His father had been warden before him and before his father his grandfather had held the same important position. So Mr. Cotter knew all about the church.

One Sunday morning as usual he was getting ready for church and had harnessed up old Dolly and hitched her to the buggy and then gone in to wash his hands, put on his coat and take a last look at himself in the glass. That is the way all good farmers do. They dress the horse first, and then themselves.

When he came out Dolly was gone. She was nowhere to be seen. He looked in the shed, and in the field and behind the barn, but there was no Dolly. Where do you think she was? Yes! She had gone off herself with the empty buggy to church and Mr. Cotter found her looking over the fence, listening to the first hymn. Old Dolly, better than most people, had good old-fashioned

habits of church-going, and she had a fine habit of being on time.

If you will take your New Testament you will find that three times we are told about the habits of Jesus. When He was twelve years old we read that according to His habit He went up to the feast at Jerusalem. When He became a full grown man He returned from His work to His own village at Nazareth and there according to His habit He entered into the little synagogue and took part in the service. Then near the close of His life we read that according to His habit He went out into the Mount of Olives to pray. These were Jesus' habits. He had good home habits, good church habits and good prayer habits. Take your Bible and find the verses where these habits of Jesus are spoken of. You will find them all in the Gospel of Luke. You will not find the word "habit" but the word "custom," which means the same. And then sit down and count over your habits, and ask yourself if you have good church habits, good prayer habits, good study habits, for your habits are just yourself.

XVII

TRY—KEEP TRYING

"Unto the end."—MATT. 24: 13

ZACCHÆUS! Did you ever hear of him? What do you know of him? Let us count up all the things we know about him. He was a Jew, but he was in the employ of the Roman government, and was thought of as a traitor to his country. He was rich, and had a fine house in the city of Jericho. He was a success in life, and was the chief man among the publicans or tax collectors. He was very small, and could not see over the heads of other people when in a crowd. He was anxious to see Jesus, so he pushed his way out of the crowd, climbed up a tree, and there he saw Jesus, and Jesus saw him, and they became friends. You remember the story. Zacchæus when he found he could not see Jesus because of the great crowd did not turn away and go home. He tried again, and overcame all obstacles and at last found himself with Jesus as his guest in his own house.

The only way to succeed is to try. Even the birds and the cattle fail and try again, until they win. The beautiful salmon that swim in the great rivers and the beautiful trout that dart so quickly from stone to stone leap the rapids and falls of

the rivers and go up and up to the head waters where they make their homes. In a great rushing river with its seething currents, its spray and foam, you can see the great salmon again and again jump out of the water and make a flying leap up the rushing, roaring waterfall. Some fail, but others try and try again and when they win they rush far up the stream where they make their homes and lay their eggs. There are just two kinds of fish in the sea, swimmers and drifters, and there are just two kinds of people. There are those who drift with the current and do what every one else does, and there are those who direct their lives according to a purpose.

Did you ever hear the proverb, "God helps those who help themselves," which means that God gives aid to those who try? There is an interesting story about William Carey, the great missionary to India. You know he was a cobbler, and in his shop he had a map of the world and thought about the world and prayed for it, and at last God called him to go out to India as one of the first missionaries. He was a great man. His motto was:

"Expect great things from God.
Attempt great things for God."

He overcame many things by trying and he learned this great lesson in his early life.

When he was a boy he was very ambitious and never permitted anything to beat him if he could help it. In his play as well as in his work he al-

ways wanted to succeed. There was a tree near his home that none of his boy friends had been able to climb. He was eager to climb that tree and tried and tried again but always failed. But he said, "It shall not beat me. I mean to climb that tree."

So every day he tried to climb the tree, but made no progress. One day, however, after tearing his clothes and scratching his legs he got more than half way up, when down he fell, all in a heap, and when he tried to get up he could not. His leg was broken.

He was just a lad and he suffered a great deal. For six long weeks he lay on his little bed unable to get up. Then he began to walk around the house and soon he was out in the yard. What do you think he did? Well, the first thing he did was to go to that very tree and try to climb it again and he did. He went to the top and down again and he was satisfied.

That was the stuff out of which the great missionary hero was made. Little wonder he is still remembered for the great work he did in India. It was the same talent to keep on and to try again that brought Zacchæus face to face with Jesus. Let nothing keep you from Jesus, your best friend. Take for your motto the words of William Carey:

"Expect great things from God.
Attempt great things for God."

XVIII

THE WORST PARASITE

"Sin lieth at the door."—GEN. 4:7

IN the third chapter of Genesis sin is likened to a serpent, a sly, sneaking, subtle serpent, that slips into our garden and strikes us with its fangs. In the fourth chapter sin is likened unto a tiger that looks as if it were asleep on the door step, but is really waiting, crouched ready to spring in and destroy all that is in the house as soon as the door is opened.

You know what a parasite is. It is something that feeds on others. It prowls around like a bandit and attacks others. All our diseases really come from little unseen parasites that get into our flesh and blood and live on our life. A parasite lies in wait at the doors of houses and nests and looks for a chance to enter and destroy. Well, sin is the worst of all parasites.

Did you ever hear of a golden wasp? It is a very beautiful creature and gets itself up in elegant garments of green and gold and pink and purple. It goes about among the flowers and garden glories like a miniature humming bird. It does not look like a parasite, a thief, or a robber, but it is. It is a dangerous, though very attractive looking criminal. The golden wasp is just as

lazy and as good-for-nothing as it is beautiful. It is a bandit and a brigand. It steals. It waits around at the door of the fly-hunting wasp, that has been off in the fields searching and toiling for food, and waits until it comes home with some dainty morsel for its children. The golden wasp cannot break into the house, for it is safely closed, and it does not know how to dig or work. So it waits its chance and when the fly-hunting wasp returns and opens the door the golden wasp like a sneak thief enters also and hides away in the back of the nest. When next year comes round the children of the fly-hunting wasp, for whom the house was built, are all gone, and instead the children of the golden wasp are in possession. The golden wasp's grub devoured the grub so carefully housed by the fly-hunting wasp. What a criminal it is!

The world is full of beautiful looking animals that are parasites and live on the life of others. A friend of mine passing along the highway one day heard a bird making a piteous noise. It kept flying to him and then back to the tree and he knew something was wrong. He stopped and followed the flying bird to the bushes and on the ground he saw a little bird. There was a thin streak of blood on its breast. He picked it up and with his handkerchief wiped away the blood stain, and was about to put it back in the nest when a great snake lifted its head from the nest. No wonder the mother bird was calling and crying. A snake was in her nest feeding upon the little

birds. My friend watched the snake and wondered how it had got into the nest, for it was many feet above the ground. He saw the snake crawl along the limb out to the farthest branch and there hanging by its tail, swung itself back and forth until it was able to touch a small tree into which it leaped.

But it did not escape. He killed it, and you can see that snake in the Museum at Washington and Jefferson College.

Sin is just a parasite coming like a snake to bite, or like a wasp to sting, or like a tiger to destroy. There are two things for us to do. First, we must keep the door tightly closed, keep the entrance barred and bolted to all who seek to do us harm. This is what the Bible tells us to do, "Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life."

Second, let us make God the keeper of our lives. He can keep us safely. The 121st Psalm is called "The Keeper's Psalm," and it has the promise "The Lord is thy keeper." One of the great missionaries of Africa said, "I have locked the door of my heart, and Jesus has the key." That is the way of safety.

"Except the Lord keep the city
The watchman waketh but in vain."

XIX

BE SOMEBODY

"I will make you."—MARK 1 : 17

HIS first name was Leon. He was a poor French boy. When he left home his mother, who kept a little shop, said to him, "My boy, before you come back try to be somebody." He went to Paris and studied hard. When other boys were loafing and smoking cigarettes Leon was reading in his little attic in the Latin Quarter at Paris. He worked hard. He did become "somebody." He became the first man in France. His name was Gambetta and when he died men said, "France has lost her greatest man."

It is wonderful how many men who began as "nobodies" really became "somebodies." Of course, everything worth while begins that way. The great oak was once a tiny acorn. The mighty river was once a little brook. Jesus, the greatest of men, was once a carpenter. Take your Bible and see how many nobodies became somebodies.

Who was Abraham? He came out of a heathen land and his father worshipped idols, but he became the father of a great nation. Who was Joseph? He was the youngest son, and began life as a messenger boy and later was sold as a

slave, but he became prime minister of Egypt. Who was Moses? He was found in a basket, beside the river Nile. He was the child of slaves, but he became the greatest statesman the world has ever known.

Who was Ruth? She was a heathen girl, born in Moab, but she became the great grandmother of King David and the sweetest woman in the Old Testament. Who was David? He was a shepherd lad, keeping his sheep around Bethlehem, but he became king of Israel. Who was Esther? She was a Jewish girl, an orphan, who became Queen of Persia, and one of the heroines of history.

Turn now to the New Testament.

Who was John the Baptist? He was a "wilderness" man, living in the desert, but he became the herald of Jesus the Saviour.

Who was Mary? She was an obscure maiden, living in the little village of Nazareth, but she became the mother of Jesus.

Who were John, and James, and Peter and Andrew? They were fishermen, but now they belong to the glorious company of the Apostles.

It matters little where we come from. It matters a great deal where we are going. When Matthew Henry, the great Bible student, proposed marriage to the beautiful girl who later became his wife, her parents said "No. We know nothing about him. We do not even know where he came from." She replied, "But I know where he is going, and I wish to go with him."

Now turn to history. Æsop, who wrote the wonderful stories we call Fables, was a slave.

Robert Burns, the poet of Scotland, was a poor farmer's son.

John Bunyan, who wrote "Pilgrim's Progress," one of the greatest of books, was a tinker, a travelling tinker.

Columbus—you know all about him—was a common sailor.

Oliver Cromwell, who became the uncrowned king of England, was the son of a brewer.

Benjamin Franklin, whom we all honour, was a printer.

John Howard, the reformer, was born in the home of a carpenter.

Samuel Johnson, the wise man of letters, was the son of a poor bookseller.

Martin Luther was a miner's son and played music on the street in a real "German band."

William Shakespeare was the son of a butcher, and William Wordsworth was a barber's boy.

They called Jesus the son of a carpenter, and thought that would explain Him, but it explained nothing. Jesus did begin life as a carpenter, but He became the Saviour of the World. There is a story in the Gospels that one day a poor sick woman, who did not wish to be seen, followed Jesus, touched the hem of His garments and was made well and strong. Jesus knew what she had done and turning around said, "Somebody touched me." She had become strong and well by touching Jesus. Peter and John and James and Mat-

thew and Mary Magdalene all came in touch with Jesus, and from being "nobodies" they became "somebodies." Jesus is the master and maker of men. To His early followers He said, "Come after me, and I will make you to become"—what?

When He first met Simon He said, "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be called Peter." The word Peter means "rock," and Peter did become a rock-like man, a strong, courageous follower of Jesus. Everything depends on the end. The important thing about anything is the end. We want to know what a child or a man will "become" before we pass judgment. The rough unpolished stone may become a beautiful diamond. A few notes may become a sweet song. A humble cottage may become a happy and radiant home. When Jesus was a carpenter He made good yokes for the oxen and built good houses and as Saviour He makes good boys and girls, good men and women. Let this then be our prayer:

"Make me
What I ought to be."

XX

THE LACE AND THE SHOE

"Mint, dill, and cummin."—MATT. 23:23

JESUS did not always speak sweet words. Sometimes His words had a sting in them. Seven times in one chapter in the Gospels He said "Woe to you," and He was speaking to the leaders of the church.

Let us think of one of these "woes" of Jesus. He was speaking to the priests and scribes and Pharisees and He told them they were not a bit religious because they were putting little trifles in the place of important things. They were required by their law to give God a tenth of all they owned, and they were careful to do so. They not only gave God a tenth of all their cattle, property, and grain, but they gave Him also a tenth of their "mint, dill, and cummin." You know what mint is. Sometimes we call it "spearmint," and sometimes "peppermint," and sometimes just "mint." Well, mint and dill and cummin are little herbs, used for flavouring vegetables or chewing gum and for medicine and these people were so anxious about these three tiny things and were forgetful of the three big things called "judgment, mercy and faith." They were will-

ing to give God a tenth of everything but were unwilling to be true, to be kind, and to be gentle and loving to others. They were interested in little things. They forgot about the big things.

The other day I took my rod and reel and went off to hunt for some speckled trout away up in the hills of Pennsylvania. Were you ever there? It is a wonderful place. The great hills rise almost to the sky, and the little streams rush down the valleys in the springtime and there the most beautiful fish in the world play hide and seek with each other and with fishermen like myself. My brother and I had gone up to Kities to fish in Parker's Run. We walked away up the valley about three miles, and there took off our shoes, and hid them under a log, and put on high rubber boots and then waded farther up the stream, perhaps three miles more.

When we came back with the trout we were very tired and sat down on the log to change our big rubber boots for our more comfortable shoes. When we looked under the log there were only three shoes. One of mine was gone. It was a very lonely place, and there were no burglars or bandits around. We looked for the missing shoe and found it some distance away. Some little animal, perhaps a porcupine, or groundhog or beaver, had found it and was carrying it off. It had scratched it a little and chewed the edges of the leather. The shoe was all right, but the interesting thing was that the lace was gone—gone completely. Either with its sharp toes, or

with its sharper teeth, the sly little thief had unloosed the lace, hole by hole, and no trace of it was left. I have often wondered what it wanted with the lace. Perhaps it wanted to make a swing, or hammock out of it, or to use it to hang one of the other little animals that stole things from its nest in the ground. Anyway it took the lace and left the shoe. That's what these cold-hearted dry-as-dust priests were doing, too. They took the little thing and left the important thing and that is just like taking the lace and leaving the shoe. We often do the same thing.

When we go to church, and listen to the word of God and the music, and the sermon and come away and talk about the soprano's hat or the minister's hands or the colour of the pipes of the organ, we are taking the lace and leaving the shoe. One Sunday a little lad said to me, "Father, that was a good sermon." I said, "Did you like it?" "Yes," he said, "but did you ever count the number of pipes in the organ?" He had got hold of the lace that time for sure, but then he was only a little fellow, and what can very little boys do in church when the sermon is long and prosy but count the pipes in the organ or the buttons on the cushion in the pew?

When we read the Bible and instead of finding Jesus in it with His message of salvation and God's wondrous love we are interested in what is the longest chapter and the shortest verse, and the numbers in the Book of Revelation or the wheels

of Ezekiel, we are getting hold of the lace and missing the shoe. Do you understand?

When at home we are loved by our parents and everything is done for us, and we act mean and peevish, what are we doing but leaving the great fine things and running off with some selfish trifle. Jesus blamed the people to whom He said, "Woe," for their neglect of the big things and not so much for their interest in little things. The best way is to take hold of both the little things and the big things. My little porcupine friend should have been off with both lace and shoe and made his nest for the winter out of them.

"These (little things) things ye should have done," said Jesus, "and not have left the (big things) other undone."

XXI

MAKING BLACK WHITE

"A clean thing out of an unclean."—Job 14:4

YOU have heard of the "Bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond." Loch Lomond is one of the most beautiful lakes in Scotland and there is a very pretty song that is sung about it, which says:

> Oh, you'll take the high road
> And I'll take the low road,
> And I'll be in Scotland before you,
> But me and my true love
> Will never meet again
> On the bonny, bonny banks
> Of Loch Lomond."

Well, near Loch Lomond, on the mountainside there is a little lake called Fairy Loch. You know in Scotland loch means lake. If you look into the beautiful waters of this little lake you will see a great many colours. It looks as if the rainbow were playing in the water. The colouring, of course, comes from the strange tinted rocks and sands at the bottom, but that is not why it is called "Fairy Loch." I will tell you why.

A long, long time ago, when the land was full of fancies and fairies people found that the fairies played around this little lake and that many

strange and wonderful things were found there. They discovered that when garments were left by the water's edge they changed to a different colour, and that if they left something to be dyed, and a thread beside it showing what colour was wanted next morning the garment was changed into that very colour. One night a shepherd left on the edge of this little mountain lake the fleece of a black sheep and beside it he put a white woollen thread to show that he wished the black dyed white. The fairies were at their wits' end. They could dye a white fleece black, or even red, or blue, or yellow, but they did not know how to change a black fleece into a white one, and in their despair they threw fleece, thread and all their colours into the lake and from that time on the lake has been called Fairy Loch and the water has a rainbow appearance. That is a very pretty story and it helps us to understand how difficult it is to make a black thing white. Job asked the question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" which is the same as saying, "Who can make a black thing white?"

Sometimes we can do it. Queen Victoria once went to see a great paper mill, and there she saw dirty and filthy looking rags. Then she saw the men take those rags and wash and clean them and make them into pure clean white paper. After she got home she received a beautiful box of fine white stationery, all engraved with her name. That was making black things white, and bringing a clean thing out of an unclean.

Sometimes nature can do it. You remember Hercules, the strong man of Greece, turned the waters of the rivers Alpheus and Peneus into the foul and dirty stables of Augeas, king of Elis, and made them pure and clean and fresh in a single day. But sometimes neither man nor nature can bring a clean thing out of an unclean or make black white. Who can make a black heart white? Who can make unclean thoughts clean? Who can change dark desires into pure Christlike purposes? Only God can. God can change black into white and so we pray:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God."

Only God can cleanse us and make our hearts white and pure. He tells us that though our sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. When those who had been redeemed were seen the question was asked, "These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they and whence came they?" and the answer was given:

"These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

God can do what men and nature and all the fairies in the world cannot do. He can make a black thing white and can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.

XXII

A FRIENDLY WORLD

"Ye are my friends."—JOHN 15:14

WHAT a friendly world this is! Sometimes we think it is a hard, cruel, selfish world, but it is not. It is a friendly world, full of friendly folk, who are looking around for love and friendship and happiness.

The world is just like a mirror. It reflects our moods. We ourselves make the image that we see in the glass. There is a little lake I know, lying in the woods far up in the Canadian wilderness, and there you hear the echo of every noise you make. If you are rowing a boat, you think you hear some one else keeping stroke with you. If you sing, you hear some one else singing. If you shout and scold the fish that has gotten away from you, some one else scolds and talks loud. That is just the way with the world. We live in a sort of echo-world and as we speak and think and act, so we are answered back.

One very hot summer day I was in the city of Cleveland. It was so hot that people were cross and I noticed a sign at the hotel desk which read, "Keep your temper, no one here wants it." It was a wise word to tired and irritable travellers. The city was filled with delegates from all over

the country, who were attending a convention, and the streets were thronged.

In that hot and hurried city I came on three friendly things. The first was a little kitten, asleep behind the window of a barber shop. It was a little grey kitten, with little spots of white on each foot, on its nose and at the end of its tail. It was lying in the sun, asleep with its head resting on one of its front feet, just like a little child lying asleep with its arm under its head, and its hand over its eyes. It was very pretty and a lot of people gathered in front of the window and smiled and talked together about the little kitten with its head pillowed on its arm, as it were. I walked up to the public square and saw a young woman standing in the midst of about a hundred pigeons. They were perched on her head, her shoulders, and were eating some grain out of her hands and from the ground near by. She had come there to feed them because she loved them and they were unafraid. Then, best of all, I came upon a fine "black beauty" police horse. There was no policeman to be seen, so there was nothing to fear. The horse was standing with his front feet away up on the sidewalk, as if looking in on the turtles and alligators playing in the city fountain. But that was not what he was doing. I soon found that out. He was a friendly horse and wanted to talk to the folks as they passed. Old ladies came and patted his nose. Old men came and scratched his forehead. He seemed to like that. Little children

came and looked into his big open eyes. Girls came and pulled his ears, and a big boy after putting his arm around his neck and whispering something in his ear put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a beautiful red apple and Mr. Black Beauty said "Thank you" and in two bites the apple was gone.

Yes, this is a friendly world. But it is our own friendliness that makes it friendly. We get just what we give. Jesus came to make the world a friendly place. He spoke of the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air. He took the little children on His knee and was kind to all, to the poor, the blind, the sick, the sinful. To be like Jesus, we too must live the friendly life. And the laws of the friendly life are given in these simple but great words of Jesus:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit:
"Blessed are they that mourn:
"Blessed are the meek:
"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.
"Blessed are the merciful:
"Blessed are the pure in heart:
"Blessed are the peacemakers."

These are the laws of the friendly life.

XXIII

FOR SALE

"Why was not this sold?"—JOHN 12:5

JUDAS believed everything in the world was for sale. Jesus had come to the home of Mary of Bethany and it was only six days before the day of the Cross, and Mary wished to do something to show her love for her Master. In our day we send flowers and fruit, but in those days they gave beautiful fragrant perfumes. Mary had bought the choicest perfume money could buy—a whole pound of it—and had bathed her Lord's weary feet with it. It was very fragrant and the whole house was filled with the sweetness of the odour of it. Judas was shocked. He did not care about beauty or fragrance or love. All he thought of was money, money, money. So he said, "Why was not this ointment sold for 300 shillings and given to the poor?" and then John, who tells the story adds, "Now this he said not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and having the bag took away what was put therein." Judas thought everything was for sale, and at the end he even sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Passing along the highway from Cleveland to Buffalo not long ago it looked as if everything was for sale. In towns, out in the country, in

front of farms, houses, stores, shops, one saw the sign "For Sale." Everything seemed to be for sale:

"Honey for Sale."
"Eggs for Sale."
"Chickens for Sale."
"Little Pigs for Sale."
"Cherries for Sale."
"Strawberries for Sale."
"New Peas for Sale."
"This House for Sale."
"Gasoline for Sale."
"Trees for Sale."
"Fresh Flowers for Sale."
"Lots for Sale."

Then I came to a railway crossing and lying beside the road was an automobile. It was all smashed and had burned until only the frame was left. I stopped and asked what had happened. A passing train had crashed into the automobile, two children were dead, and the father and mother were in the hospital and as I journeyed on I met the signs:

"This Barn for Sale."
"Vegetables for Sale."
"Packed Lunches for Sale."

I seemed to see another sign "Life for Sale." Of course, there was no such sign, but I just seemed to see it. Once upon a time they did sell "lives." They bought and sold little children and men and women at so many dollars apiece. That was in the days of slavery, and that was a dreadful thing to do. Then I thought of the two little children whose lives had been "sold" to the de-

mand for speed, and to carelessness on the part of those who permit dangerous crossings on great public highways. Every such crossing ought to have a sign in red letters "Life for Sale Here." Whenever we have dangerous streets, dangerous water, dangerous theatres, where life is held cheap, there we should have a sign "Life for Sale Here."

Not very long ago a teacher in a boys' school asked each one in the class to write down what were the ten greatest of all inventions. One boy handed in his paper and said "I've written down one that is the greatest of all inventions. There isn't anything can touch it." When the teacher opened the boy's paper he found there these ten inventions: steam engine, steam whistle, sewing machine, telephone, telegraph, radio, airship, spectacles, automobile, compass, and last and in big letters "Man—Invented by God." The lad was right. Human life is the greatest of all things in the world, and everything ought to be made safe for little children, and for fathers and mothers, so that the world will be a safe place for them to live in. Jesus spoke hard words about those who harmed or hurt the life of a little child. And you can harm or hurt the mind and heart of a little child as well as you can harm his body. Jesus said:

> "But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea."

XXIV

THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD

"Gashmu saith it."—NEH. 6:6

IN the days of Nehemiah there was a terrible gossip by the name of Gashmu. All we know of him is that he was a gossip. He told everything he knew, and a lot of things he did not know. For a gossip is a pedlar, a pedlar of news, old news and new news, true news and false news, news about every one and news that is told with a wink of the eye and a shrug of the shoulder.

I think gossip is the worst thing in the world. It is bad enough for a girl to gossip and perhaps it is nearly as bad for a woman, but when a man or a boy gets to be a gossip, he is both a nuisance and a knave. This man Gashmu tried to stop Nehemiah from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem by peddling stories about him, saying he was a traitor and a rebel, and reporting to the people and to the king that Nehemiah instead of being a God-fearing, praying man was selfish and proud and wanted to be a king. When Nehemiah heard about all of Gashmu's gossiping ways he sent him a message which was plain and easily understood. He said to him, "There are no such things done as thou sayest but thou feignest them out

of thine own heart." That is to say, he made the stories up out of lies.

That is a terrible thing to do. Nothing will destroy the peace of a home or the happiness of a heart more quickly than mean stories that are not true. One of the greatest women America ever knew told her girls that before they told a story about any one they should pass it through three test questions:

Is it true?
Is it kind?
Is it necessary?

No gossip would get past any two of these questions. No gossip is ever kind or necessary and much of it is not true.

There is an Italian tale to the effect that a peasant once confessed to an old and very kind priest that he had spread a bad story about a good man. The priest said to him. "You have done a very dreadful thing, and you must be punished for what you have done. This you must do. Take a sack of feathers and go to every house and yard in the town and drop one feather in each yard. Be careful not to miss a single house or yard. When you have finished come back to me." The peasant thought he had gotten off with a light punishment and quickly he went through the village with his sack and in each yard he dropped one tiny feather. Then he returned to the priest and said, "I have finished my task." "No," said the old

priest, "you have not finished. Your task will not be done till you take your sack and go again to every yard in the village and collect every feather you have dropped and bring them all here to me." The peasant was amazed and said, "I cannot do that. I could not do that if I were to live forever. Many of them have blown to the ends of the earth. It is impossible." "That is true," said the old priest, "so it is with gossip. It is easily dropped but words once spoken can never be gathered up again."

The people who heard Jesus speak "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." Jesus spoke gracious words. He warned us about using "idle" words. He said:

> "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

And remember that:

> "If you your lips
> Would save from slips
> Five things attend with care,
> Of whom you speak,
> To whom you speak,
> And how, and when,
> And where."

XXV

THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD

"Lest we drift."—Heb. 2 : 1

GUESS what is the easiest thing in the world. The easiest thing in the world is to drift. You do not need to do anything. You can just let yourself go, and you will be carried along. If you are in a crowd, you will be pushed forward or backwards. If you are out in a boat you will be carried along. You do not need to work or plan or pray. You can fold your arms and look up at the stars, or down at your toes and you will be swept along to—well, that depends.

Let us think about it.

There is a good kind of drifting!

When Nansen tried to reach the far north with his ship he was beaten back and back until he pushed his boat into the polar current and the swift flowing ocean streams swept him on and on, without any great effort. His work was to keep in the current. That was a good way to drift. We, too, can guide our life into the current of God's will and be carried along to our goal. That was how Paul lived. The winds of God filled his sail and carried him across the seas of this life into the heavenly harbour. But this way of liv-

ing is not usually called drifting. That is not the right use of the word.

There is a bad kind of drifting.

Drifting is always bad when it means carelessness in the midst of danger. In the fall of 1918, a great scow full of cement was being towed down the Niagara River. The tug towed it down nearer and nearer the Falls and then caught in the swift current it broke away and shot like an express train towards the Falls. Two men were on the scow and nothing could be done for them, and they were helpless. Every now and then the great swirling rapids heaved the great flat-bottomed boat up and down, swung it round and round and then sped it on its way. People along the shore watched and waited as the men on the boat waved in vain for help. A few more yards and they would be swept over the precipice. Suddenly the bow of the great scow rose up and as suddenly fell, and then stopped. It seemed as if a miracle had happened. There in the river, in the midst of the mad rush of waters the mighty thing stood, as if it were a rock. A line was shot from the land and then a rope was drawn across the rapids, and then a stronger rope, and across it the two men were brought in safety to the land. How glad and how amazed they were. They had been face to face with death and suddenly life and safety had come to them.

The old scow is still there, battling against the rapids. In winter the great ice floes beat upon it but it remains in the river bed, immovable, and

year by year people wonder at it, and say that it rests upon a great solid rock. But it is very unsafe. Some day it will be gone. Some day the rapids will beat it to pieces, and like a mass of rubbish it will be swept over the cataract and be seen no more. People think they are safe because for a few years they are able to withstand the current and in the face of danger escape, but the precipice is always in sight and the sweeping, swirling, struggling waters are never still.

The easiest thing in the world is to drift. Samson, whom we call the strongest man that ever lived, drifted into ease and pleasure and sin and did not know that he was slipping from the place of safety until he was caught in the swift flowing rapids and carried down to death. We read of him that "he wist not that his strength had departed from him."

Don't Drift.
Don't Drift into Easy Ways.
Don't Drift into Careless Ways.
Don't Drift into Dangerous Ways.
Don't Drift into Vulgar Ways.
Don't Drift into Selfish Ways.
Don't Drift away from Home.
Don't Drift away from Church.
Don't Drift away from Prayer.
Don't Drift away from God.

DON'T DRIFT!

XXVI

DEAD SPOTS

"These are spots."—JUDE 12.

IT would be foolish for me to explain anything to you about the radio and the wireless and the marvellous mystery of broadcasting music and speeches and messages through the air. You know more about all that than I do. That is to say, you know more about the wires and the tubes, and the phones, and the amplifiers and all those things, but perhaps there are some things you don't know. Do you know that there are dead spots in the air? "Dead spots?" Yes, "dead spots." What are "dead spots"? Well, dead spots are just dead spots. That is all I know about them. I thought the air would carry the voice anywhere, over mountains and valleys and forests and lakes and oceans. Not long ago I received a letter from a lighthouse keeper out in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Nova Scotia and it told me how every Sunday the people on the little island gathered to hear the Sunday afternoon service broadcasted from the Shadyside Presbyterian Church, and asked me if our Choir would sing "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning." After a while a letter came saying the message and the

music came through a storm over land and sea, right to the lighthouse. That is wonderful. It is strange. It is mysterious.

But it seems the air does not carry the voice everywhere. There are "dead spots" in the ether, or the air, as we call it. No one really knows why or how these dead spots happen. They only know they exist. We are told there is a dead spot between Baltimore and Washington, and messages from one city to the other are lost. The people of Philadelphia have trouble hearing New York and Newark, and ship stations in Long Island Sound find it difficult to keep in touch with the shore stations out on the Atlantic side of the Island, only forty or fifty miles away, and the listeners at Atlantic City find it hard sometimes to pick up signals from New York, and I suppose there are many other regions where there are dead spots.

No one has yet explained why there are these empty or dead regions. Something, however, interferes with the ether waves that carry the voice. Some have said that sand acts as a shield, and makes a dead spot. Others say that iron and other minerals in the earth deflect the messages while others have pointed out the influence of high powered wires and cables, but no one yet really knows. Some time we will find out and be able perhaps to overcome all such interferences and dead spots between stations.

We are interested in all these radio novelties, but dead spots have always been in the world.

Sometimes there is a dead spot in us, and we cannot signal right from one station to another. Here is a station we call our "will." It is the power-house where we do things, and here is another station called our "intellect." It is the power-house where things are learned and thought about and known, and there is often a dead spot between our knowing and our doing. We know what is right but we do not do it. This is what Saint Paul meant when he said:

"For that which I do, I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise."

Paul said the dead spot was caused by sin.

There are many dead spots between the station I call myself and the station I call some one else. In the Book of Jude we read about "dead spots" in the feasts of those to whom he was writing. Some dark cloud had come between friends. Boys who ought to be friends are hindered because of some dead spot, and a girl has, as she says, "no use" for some other girl, because of something she cannot explain. These dead spots between boys and between girls and between men, are caused by selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, or by some other dark cloud of sin. Only love can overcome such empty spaces.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us."

Sometimes there is a dead spot between the station which I call myself and the station I call God. We find it hard to speak with God, and we find it difficult to catch God's signals to us. You know what I mean, for prayer is very much like "speaking into the air," and when we find it hard to pray it is as if we had come upon a dead spot. Dead spots are caused by carelessness, or neglect, or worldliness, or sin, or wrong thoughts of others. When Leonardo da Vinci was working on his great painting "The Last Supper" it is said he painted the face of a man he hated as Judas. When he came to paint the face of Jesus he could not do it. He tried and tried again and failed. Then he remembered why and painting out the face of the man he hated, and putting another face in its place he was able to see the face of Jesus so clearly that he painted him more beautifully than he had dreamed he could. A wrong thought, a wrong feeling, a wrong act, makes a dead spot between God and us. Now turn to Isaiah, the first chapter, verses fifteen, sixteen, seventeen and eighteen, and read:

"And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith Je-

hovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

When we are right with God, and with one another, and right with ourselves, then the "dead spots" disappear, and we hear clearly the messages we should hear.

Away up in a lonely spot near North Bay in Canada, painted on a big boulder, in large red letters, I came upon the words:

"Get right with God."

It startled me, for I did not expect to come face to face with a sermon in such a place, but that is a sermon which is always worth hearing and worth preaching, only I would change one word Instead of saying "Get right with God" I would say, "Keep right with God."

Keep right with God.
Keep right with one another.
Keep right with yourself.

XXVII

CATS AND CLOVER

"No man liveth to himself."—Rom. 14:7

DID you know that Saint John once led Saint Peter into trouble? This was the way it happened. When Jesus was arrested by the Roman soldiers and led away to the high priest Peter fled in fear. John, too, at first kept at a safe distance but later came to the palace of the high priest. John was known at the high priest's palace and he entered to see what would happen to Jesus. Meanwhile Peter came out of love and curiosity and stood outside the door. Somehow he got word to John that he was there and then John went out and spoke to the maid at the door who because of her regard for John allowed Peter to enter. You know what happened to Peter in the palace of the high priest. He was led to deny that he knew Jesus. He openly cursed and swore that he was not one of Jesus' disciples and when Jesus looked at him in love and pity Peter fled from the place in tears, a broken-hearted man. It was a bad thing John did for Peter when he gained for him an entrance to the palace of the high priest. It was Peter's undoing.

The fact is, we do not act alone. Everything

we do touches some one else. No one lives to himself.

Did you ever hear the story of cats and clover? It was a wise man by the name of Darwin who discovered that beautiful red and purple clover had something to do with black and grey and tan and all sorts of colored cats. And this was the way he found out this interesting secret. He covered a hundred red and purple clover tops with little bags of muslin and when the clover was ripe he found these covered clover tops had no seed. Then he found the other clover tops all had come to seed, and then he knew this was because the bumble bees which had carried pollen from flower to flower had fertilised the clover and that the clover tops that had been covered were not fertilised because the bumble bee avoided them. So you see clover depends on the bumble bee to bring it to seed. Then he found that the little baby children of the bumble bee were nursed in the ground in little tiny cradles and that the field mice hunted for them and ate them, so that the mice which killed the bees thereby harmed the clover. But he discovered the clover near the village was fertilised because the mice that detroyed the baby bees were caught by the village cats and so the cats without knowing it, by killing the mice that killed the bees, helped the clover to come to seed. It all sounds a little like:

"This is the farmer sowing his corn
That kept the cock that crowed in the morn
That waked the priest all shaven and shorn
That married the man all tattered and torn

That kissed the maiden all forlorn
That milked the cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the dog
That worried the cat
That killed the rat
That ate the malt
That lay in the house that Jack built."

The bees depend on the cats and the clover depends on the bees, and without knowing it they help or harm each other. The mice feed the cats, and the bees feed the clover and the clover feeds the sheep and the cows, and the sheep give wool and lamb chops and the cows give us milk and beef broth and shoe leather and other necessary things.

What a strange world it is. No one lives to himself. We depend on one another. We either help or hurt each other. Like the ripples in the river one touches another, until the shore is reached. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus and Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and led three thousand to Jesus. A little boy gave his lunch to Andrew and Andrew gave it to Jesus and with it Jesus fed more than five thousand.

XXVIII

THE TIDE

"But by my spirit."—ZECH. 4:6

WATER is very much like boys and girls. Think of the things water does and you will see what I mean. Water runs. Sometimes it runs faster than any boy can run. Water sings. We are told the river sings its way to the sea. Water is coloured by the country through which it flows. If it runs through rocks it is clear and crystal, but if it drains low land it is brown and muddy and boys and girls get to be very much like the place where they live. Water boils, and I have seen both boys and girls, big and little, boil and sputter and talk wild. Water rises and falls, and in some strange way boys and girls rise and fall, we scarcely know how. The falling and rising of the water in the ocean is called the tide. We say the tide ebbs and flows. Have you ever seen the tide go out and come in? When the tide comes in you can hear it swish and swish and then break on the shore and it covers the rocks and the bushes and fills the creeks and the rivers. When the tide goes out, or ebbs, as we say, it seems as if the great ocean were drawing back from the shore, farther and farther,

until the boats rest on the beach and the great shore line is bare.

What a strange thing the tide is. We read that one of the old wise men of long ago, unable to explain the reason for the ebb and flow of the tide, at last in despair drowned himself in the sea. In a sort of way we know now that it is the moon that makes the tide. The moon is near the earth and pulls the earth towards itself. It pulls both the land and the water, but the water pulls easier and so the water ebbs and flows with the attractive power of the moon. Sometimes the water rises a few feet and sometimes, as in the Bay of Fundy, it rises fifty feet.

There is nothing in our world so powerful, so strong, as the tide. It pushes back the shore line and washes away cliffs and covers islands. Years ago when they were building a great bridge over the East River in New York they found in the bed of the river where they wished to place one of the central piers, an old sunken ship. It was buried in the mud and would not budge. The strongest tug was chained to it, but it could not be moved. Then one of the engineers asked the tide to help him. He took a great flat bottomed scow and when the tide was out chained it to the old sunken ship. Then he sat down and waited. He waited for the tide to come in. Slowly the water rose, inch by inch, and the chains and cables strained and groaned as the water rose. Inch by inch the old boat in the mud rose until at last, under the mighty pulling of the tide, it was lifted

out of the mud, and then hauled out of the way. The tide had done what man could not do.

There are many things we cannot do. We cannot lift ourselves. We cannot save ourselves. But God can. God's power is like the tide. When Moses was caught as in a trap he exclaimed, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." The Old Testament prophet told the people of his day who were trying and failing and trying again and failing that victory would come "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." When we lay hold of God's love and God's power, we are lifted out of our sin and selfishness into love and life and into the liberty of the children of God.

XXIX

THE WATER WHEEL

"A well of water."—JOHN 4: 14

YEARS ago, back in the time of Queen Elizabeth, there lived in Spain a beautiful woman by the name of Theresa. She is known to-day as Saint Theresa. She lived in a convent, enclosed with high walls, and inside the walls was a garden, and Theresa loved the garden with its flowers and trees and walks, but best of all she loved the old well in the garden. It was an old well and the water was lifted from the well by means of a wheel, to which were attached earthen vessels which dipped the water and lifted it up as the wheel turned.

Theresa loved the garden with its flowering trees, its cypresses and vines, and the long deep shadows, but best of all she loved the old well. It was cool there, and the light and shadows playing upon the surface of the silent water reflected her thoughts.

She was not idle, for she loved work too well, and later travelled thousands of miles, and served as a missionary to the wild and cruel Moors. Meanwhile she was busy with her thoughts, and her thoughts were not about the garden and the

water wheel only. She was thinking about God and faith and heaven and prayer, but most of all she was thinking about prayer. Her soul she said was a garden, and it was her task in life to have beautiful things growing there. But things will not grow in a garden without water and things will not grow in the garden of the heart without prayer.

And as she thought she came to know that there were four ways of watering the garden and there were also four ways of bringing forth beauty in the garden of the soul.

First, we can draw water with our own hands out of the deep well. In the same way, we can by effort, by churchgoing, Bible reading, and "saying" prayers, find refreshment for the flowers and fruit of the spirit.

Second, we can draw water by means of the water wheel. This is an easier and better way. So we may in moments of quiet devotion find the sweet influence of God working in our hearts.

Third, we can water our garden by means of an overflowing well that of itself will irrigate the soil. This was what Jesus promised when He said, "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." This is a fountain within our own souls that overflows into all our life and causes the garden flowers of love and sweetness to bloom.

Fourth, and best of all, said Theresa, the garden may be watered by the rain from heaven. Sometimes God himself blesses us we know not

how. He comes and brings with Him life and light and the beauty of His peace.

What a wonderful woman Theresa was, and how she loved to talk and walk in the garden with God, and how happy she was to discover the secret of her own peace not in the garden of the convent, but in the garden of her own soul. There is an old story of a Scotch nobleman who was driven inside his castle walls by the enemy, who sought to starve him out. Months passed and one day a bunch of fine fish, fresh from the sea, was hanging from the castle window. Then the enemy knew that there was a secret passage from the castle to the sea, and that those within had an unfailing source of supply. This was what Jesus meant when He said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, looking down into the deep, dark well:

"Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

XXX

FINDING THE WAY

"The asses are lost."—1 Sam. 9:3

IT is wonderful how birds and animals find their way. They do not have a compass, but they pick their way as if they knew exactly where to go and what to do. When Saul was a young man, before he became king of Israel, his father sent him to find some asses which had strayed from the farm and lost their way. Saul in company with a servant started out to find them. We are not told how long they were gone, but we are told they were gone so long that Saul's father began to worry over his son more than he had worried over the lost asses and in the end the asses came home themselves, and Saul found a kingdom instead. That is a way with all wild and tame things of the woods and the fields. They know how to find their way home. Is not that what the nursery rhyme says:

> "Little Bo-peep has lost her sheep
> And doesn't know where to find them,
> Let them alone, and they'll come home
> Wagging their tails behind them."

That wise man of France—Fabre—who knows all about birds and bees, once took forty mason

wasps and began marking them with chalk and mucilage so he would know them. It was hard work marking the wasps and before he was done twenty of them were either hurt or had disappeared, and he had left twenty good and sound mason wasps well marked. He took these twenty wasps three miles from home and had his little daughter watch the nest from which he had taken them. There was a high wind blowing when he let them free three miles from their home, but they started off, "straight as a bee" we say, and in a little while fifteen had arrived back in their own old home laden with honey. He does not say what became of the other five. I suppose they found other companions along the way and another nest. It is a wonderful instinct for direction which animals and bees and birds have. There is a verse in the Bible which says:

"Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtledove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the law of Jehovah."

Why is it that God's people do not know the way to God? Many folks get lost on the way. They fall into danger, run into dark places, get among bad companions and forget about God, who is their true home. "God is our refuge." Sometimes birds in their long flights get lost and hundreds of them perish in the cold. We do not know what happens to the birds when they miss their way, but we know why boys and girls get out of the true path. It is because of sin. Sin

disturbs our sense of direction. Sin, as we would say, "deflects the compass."

A ship was once wrecked on the coast of Ireland. No one was to blame, for the captain was very careful and the weather had been good. But the ship went down off the rocks and after the disaster a diver was sent down to see if the trouble could be discovered. The diver brought up the compass and it was found that it was not true. When it was examined they found in it a little piece of steel, the point of a blade of a knife. The day before the wreck one of the crew, while cleaning the compass, broke off the point of the blade, and it had done all the damage. It had "deflected the compass," and the ship with some of its crew and all of its cargo had gone down.

A great man, whose name was Augustine, once said, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee." We should be able to find our way to God as naturally as wasps find their nest or the sheep their fold, or the cattle their shelter and we would if sin did not disturb our sense of direction and lead us out of the way. Let us keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. Let us be pure in heart, for the pure in heart shall see God.

XXXI

AFRAID OF THE ZEAL

"The zeal of thine house."—Ps. 69:9

THEODORE ROOSEVELT was a brave man. It is hard to think he was ever afraid of anything. He was a soldier. He was a rough rider. He was a hunter of wild beasts in Africa. He was an explorer and nearly lost his life tracing the River of Doubt. But once he was afraid. Once he was so afraid that he remembered it all his life and liked to tell about it.

This is what happened. When he was a boy he played in Madison Square in New York City. It was not such a busy place as it is now, with its automobiles and busses and street cars and taxis and tall skyscrapers. There were no taxis, no autos, no busses, no skyscrapers then, and he used to play hide and seek among the trees and bushes of the park and around the Presbyterian Church. He was interested in the Church, and one Saturday when it was open and the sexton was working around and getting it ready for Sunday, Theodore stood on the sidewalk and looked up at the towers and windows and in through the door. The sexton knew him and said, "Step inside and look around, lad," but he drew away and said, "No, thank you, but I know what you've got in

there." The sexton was amused and said, "What do you think I have in there?" "Oh, I know," said Theodore, "I know what you have." The old man looked at the boy with a smile and said, "There is nothing in here. Step inside and look." But Theodore would not step inside, and as the sexton came to lead him into the church Theodore turned and ran for home three blocks away.

He told his mother what had happened, for he was afraid, and his mother said, "Why did you not go in the church when you were invited?" Theodore said, "No, I don't want to go into the church. They have a 'zeal' in there," and his eyes opened wide, for he had pictures of a dragon, or an alligator, or some other dreadful animal. "What on earth do you mean?" said his mother, and then Theodore told her that when he was at that church some Sundays before the minister had read and spoken about the "zeal" in the church which would eat people, and his mother remembered that the minister's text that day had been "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And then his mother had a good laugh.

Lest you do not know let me tell you what that word "zeal" means. Jesus when he went up to Jerusalem found the temple of God filled with oxen, sheep, and doves, and men who bought and sold. Jesus was angry, for God's house is not a marketplace, but a place of prayer, so He took a piece of rope and drove the men and the animals headlong from the Temple, and the disciples as they watched Jesus remembered the words of one

of the Psalms, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," which means that love for God's house had mastered him, love for God's house had captured his heart.

In a certain way, too, love for God's house possessed Theodore Roosevelt and once he wrote down the reasons why everybody, big and little, rich and poor, old and young, should go to church, and these are his nine reasons:

1. In this actual world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid down grade.

2. Church work and church attendance mean the cultivation of the habit of feeling some responsibility for others.

3. There are enough holidays for most of us. Sundays differ from other holidays in the fact that there are fifty-two of them every year—therefore on Sundays go to church.

4. Yes, I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in a man's own house, just as well as in a church. But I also know, as a matter of cold fact, the average man does not thus worship.

5. He may not hear a good sermon at church. He will hear a sermon by a good man who, with his good wife, is engaged all the week in making hard lives a little easier.

6. He will listen to and take part in reading

some beautiful passages from the Bible. And if he is not familiar with the Bible, he has suffered a loss.

7. He will take part in singing some good hymns.

8. He will meet and nod or speak to good, quiet neighbours. He will come away feeling a little more charitable toward all the world, even toward those excessively foolish young men who regard churchgoing as a soft performance.

9. I advocate a man's joining in church work for the sake of showing his faith by his work.

It is a good thing to have a burning love for God's house and I hope you will not be afraid of zeal, but that you will be afraid of carelessness, and lack of interest in the things and house of God.

XXXII

THE HIDDEN SPRING

"A well of water."—GEN. 21 : 19

IN the early chapters of the Bible there is a story of a little boy who with his mother was driven from his home. Together they wandered in the wilderness, without friends or home, and sometimes were without food or water. There seemed to be no hope, and the mother put the little boy under a shrub and went off so she would not see him die. But God heard the little lad's cry and opened his mother's eyes and behold, near by she saw a well of water, so they were refreshed and went on their way to a new home where the boy grew into a great man. His name was Ishmael, and his mother's name was Hagar.

Springs of water are often hidden. I remember fishing in one of the beautiful inland lakes of northern Ontario, a few miles from the Magnetawan River. It was a shallow lake, and the shore was full of long weeds and water lilies and the water was dark and unpleasant to drink. My brother who was with me, and who had been there before, said he knew where there was a spring. So we lifted anchor and started for the tree he pointed out on the farther shore. When we

landed he said, "It ought to be here," but no spring could be seen. We wandered around trying to discover a tiny stream of spring water. Then we listened, but no sign or sound of running water could we find. At last we came to a little opening in the weeds, and my brother said, "It must be here." But the place looked very uninviting. The ground was covered with rotted leaves and dark green moss and the water of the lake made a green line along the edge. But we stooped down and began with our hands to scrape away the leaves and moss and weeds. Then something happened. When we cleared away the leaves and the moss and the broken twigs, and gouged out a hole in the clean, cool sand underneath, a little tiny stream of cool, clear water began to trickle into it, and it was soon filled with the purest of cold spring water. No one could mistake it. It was crystal clear and as cold as if it came out of the rock in winter. There it flowed under the leaves and the rubbish, and lost itself in the waters of the lake.

It is a parable.

The sweetest springs are often found in unlikely places.

In the dark days of sorrow we often find a spring of joy.

In the hard days when work must be done and lessons learned we find in action a spring of refreshment.

On the long, long road we find a spring where we may rest and find strength.

God often opens our eyes and we see "a well of water" in the desert.

We find goodness, and joy, and blessing where we least expect it. This is what God promises to do. He promises that "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the glowing sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water."

Watch for the Hidden Spring.
It is sure to be near by.
It is for you to find.

XXXIII

AN EASTER STORY-SERMON

"He is risen."—MATT. 28:6

EASTER always comes with Spring. This is very interesting for Spring is just like a resurrection. After the dark cold winter, when trees and flowers all seem to die, then Spring comes and the birds return, the trees revive, flowers bloom and life everywhere reveals itself.

Spring is a time of joy, and so is Easter. It is a time for happy hearts and cheery songs. The Easter chimes ring and call all little children to rejoice because Christ the Lord is risen. Spring, too, is a time to watch and work. Spring tells us that the time for sowing has come. If we miss the seed time, there will be no harvest. In the same way Easter tells us that this life is the seed time and that the harvest will come by and by. The Bible tells us that he that soweth to the flesh shall reap death, but he that soweth to the spirit shall reap life—life everlasting.

Easter then speaks to us of seed sowing, of opportunity, of responsibility, of the need to take care, and to live as expecting the coming harvest. Let me show you what that means.

One of the first and greatest of modern Christian missionaries was Robert Moffat. He went

to Africa and preached the Gospel to black slaves and savages of that great continent. Once when he was far from his mission station he visited an old and famous chief, Macaba by name. He was a great chief, a mighty warrior. He had fought many battles and had killed thousands of men, women, and little innocent children. His friends tried to keep the missionary from visiting the old savage chief, but Dr. Moffat was fearless and knew that God would keep him and help him preach the Gospel even to the chief.

Macaba received him kindly and placed him in the centre of fifty or sixty of his head-men and warriors, and waited for the missionary to speak. Dr. Moffat told them the simple story of Jesus, and when he came to the Easter story the old chief stood up, all excited, and said:

"What, what are those words about the dead? The dead arise, you say?"

"Yes," said Dr. Moffat, "Jesus rose and all the dead shall rise."

"Will my father rise?"

"Yes," said the missionary.

"Will all those who have been eaten by lions, tigers, crocodiles, rise?"

"Yes," said Dr. Moffat. "They shall rise and come to judgment."

"Will all those killed in battle rise?"

"Yes, and they will receive justice."

Turning to his warriors Macaba said, "Did you ever hear such words?"

"Never," they said.

Then the old chief, frightened, put his hand on the missionary's shoulder, and said: "Father, I love you much. Your visit has made my heart white like milk. The words of your mouth are sweet like honey. But these words of a resurrection must not be spoken again. I do not wish to hear any more about the dead rising. The dead cannot rise. They shall not rise."

"Tell me, my friend," said the missionary, "why I must not speak of the resurrection."

Lifting up his arm, which had been strong in battle, and shaking his hand, as if grasping a spear, the chief said, "I have slain thousands, and they must not rise again."

The old chief had sowed the seeds of murder and hate and war, and was afraid of the harvest.

Yes, Easter tells us that our life is like Spring. It is a time for sowing seed. Let us see that we sow good seed.

Let us sow love, not hate.

XXXIV

THE RAVENS

"I have commanded the ravens."—1 KINGS 17:4

SOMETIMES we use the birds for messengers. One Sunday morning when I was speaking to the children about "Home" I let two carrier pigeons out of the church window with messages, and they went straight home over the hills of Pittsburgh, and over the Allegheny River to their own home.

Sometimes God uses birds for messengers. Do you remember Elijah? He was one of the great heroes of the Bible times. He belonged to God's out of doors, and was afraid of no man, not even the king. The king was wicked and so was the queen, and God sent Elijah to them with a message. It was a strange message. Elijah told Ahab, the king, and Jezebel, the queen, that because of their wickedness there would be no rain for three and a half years. That was a terrible thing, for it meant famine and distress, and knowing this Elijah fled and though the king tried to find him and had his armies search for him all over the country he could not be found.

And this was the reason. God chose his hiding place. It was in a wild place, near the Jordan, beside a little brook called Cherith, and God

commanded the ravens to feed him, and so "the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook." I have often wondered why God asked the ravens to serve Elijah. Why did he not ask the blue jay or the red bird, or the crane, or the swift flying swallow? The raven is such a strange old bird. It has a harsh voice, like a man, and is sort of savage and boisterous. But I think I know why God used the raven and not the crane or the sparrow. The raven is a wise bird. It is the wisest of all the birds. How do I know? Well, I know just because I know. It is wise because it always gets married, and it takes a wife for life. It keeps up the same home, the same nest year after year, and so lives longer than almost any other bird. Then it is wise in the ways of other birds. It can mimic the songs of other birds and the cries of animals. If you could listen to it in the evening you would hear it, sort of singing itself to sleep, crooning over the events of the day, talking about everything it has seen or heard and you would hear it giving a bit of the barking of a dog, and the bleating of a sheep, and the lowing of a cow. Yes, the raven is a wise old bird, and knows how to keep a secret and to keep guard over its task. That is why God used it. He needed wisdom and shrewdness and sense and so Ahab and Jezebel never found out where Elijah was in hiding and Elijah never wanted for bread. God needs wise messengers. When He sent out His disciples as missionaries

He said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

God needs wise fathers and wise mothers and wise boys and wise girls. Hugh Price Hughes was one of the greatest of Gospel preachers. He was studying to be a lawyer when God called him to be a minister. So he wrote his father a very short letter. This was what he wrote: "My dear father, I think I ought to become a Christian minister. Your affectionate son." He had a wise father, a very wise father, and this was the letter his wise father sent him, "My dear boy, I would rather you should be a Christian minister than to be Lord Chancellor of England. Your affectionate father."

God needs wise messengers.

If he had more wise fathers and wise mothers we would have more wise ministers.

Yes, God needs wise messengers.

That is perhaps why God used the ravens.

XXXV

OLD FOLKS AND TREES

"How old art thou?"—GEN. 47:8

THAT was the first question Pharaoh, king of Egypt, asked Jacob. Joseph, you remember, brought his father down to Egypt during the famine and presented him to the king. The first thing the king said was, "How old art thou?" We would never think of saying an impolite thing like that. We keep away from all questions about age. The first thing we would say would be something like this, "My, how young you look! I thought to see an old man, but you are as young looking as your son Joseph."

But we have queer ideas about age. The people of Jacob's time considered age honourable and the older a man was the more he was proud of it. That was the way Jacob felt and he was proud of his age, and was ashamed he was not older, so he said to the king, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

Jacob's father had lived till he was one hundred

and seventy five, and Jacob had lived only a hundred and thirty. That seems a long life. We have no men living as long as that now. Rarely do we see a person reach ninety, much less a hundred years. There are plenty of things that live longer and perhaps that is why trees have been connected with worship and religion. That is why trees are our friends. They are here when we come and they remain after we go. Jesus, you remember, loved the trees. Among the olive trees of the Garden of Gethsemane he kept tryst with God and the angels. When every one deserted him and left him the trees seemed to understand him, and one of our American poets has written these beautiful words about Jesus and the trees:

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little grey leaves were kind to Him:
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came."

Do you know how to tell the age of a tree? If you cut through a tree trunk and look at the end you will see that it is covered with a lot of tiny circles which you can count. Each ring means a year. You can count the rings because there is a difference in the growth of the tree in summer and in winter. Each ring means a year's growth and so the rings, as the years go by, spread like ripples on the water. The big trees called the sequoias have as many as 2425 rings which means

that these tree giants began to grow over five hundred years before Christ was born. In the same way we can tell the age of fish by their scales, and of rattlesnakes by their rattles and of cattle by their horns.

But you cannot tell the age of a man or a woman that way. Indeed, you can't tell it at all. When she is thirty she may look like twenty and when she is sixteen she may look like forty. You tell age by its wisdom, its sweetness, its quietness, its graciousness, and its charm. There are two things that should be said about old age.

First, old age should be reverenced. Did you ever watch how people who love old trees care for them? They have the tree doctor come and watch them and sometimes give them medicine and sometimes operate on them to keep them in good health. And how much better is a man than a tree? When Jacob was introduced to Pharaoh, the king, he was treated with honour and respect. Let us reverence all old people, and by reverencing them I mean serve them and love them. How old are you? Six? Soon you will be sixteen and in a little while you will be sixty.

Second, let us prepare for old age. That is a strange thing to say to boys and girls but it is the right thing to say. The Bible tells us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth before old age creeps on. All old folks were once little children and a happy childhood should mean a happy old age. The way to have a good old age is to have a good youth, for age and years

have nothing whatever to do with joy and goodness and a happy heart.

There is a story of an old monk who went out into the forest and there he listened to the singing of the birds. When he came back no one knew him and none remembered him. Then they looked for his name in the records and discovered that he had been gone for a hundred years. The beauty of the birds' song had made the years seem like a moment. Years have nothing to do with goodness. A thousand years in God's sight is like a day. Be good and always be young.

XXXVI

A CHILD GOES TO CHURCH

"Christ loved the church."—EPH. 5:25

THE church should be the most beautiful place in all the world. I would like to see everything about the church beautiful. That was the way David the king felt about it. It was in his mind and heart to build a beautiful temple of God in Jerusalem. He knew it was not right even for the king to dwell in a beautiful house and permit the worship of God to be conducted in a tent. So he charged Solomon, his son, to build the Temple and to make it beautiful. This is what he said: "The house that is to be builded for Jehovah must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries."

So David prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and of brass and iron without weight, and timber and stone, and the Temple became the most beautiful thing in the land.

That is right.

The church should be the most beautiful thing in the world because people see with their eyes as well as hear with their ears. The other day

in a newspaper I came upon a story of how a little girl went to church. This is what she heard and saw there.

First, all the people sing and then—they say
"Our Father," just as I do every day;
It makes me feel so proud, because I, too,
Know how to pray the words that Grown-Ups do.
Right after that, four men march down the aisles—
(My Uncle Joe is one: he always smiles
On week-days—but on Sundays, what a change!
Church seems to make him look so stern and strange!)
They all pass silver plates, and each one there
Must put in money, like you pay a fare.
I carry my own purse, and when it's time
For *me* to pay, put in a brand-new dime.
I like this part of church, but later, when
The man in robes begins to talk, why then
My thoughts, like birds, go flying anywhere—
(But God, who lives here in this house, won't care
So long as I sit still). The sun shines through
Three stained glass windows just above our pew;
One of them shows a Shepherd with a lamb
Cuddled close to his shoulder. Oh, I am
So fond of him! Within that kind, strong arm
No little lamb could ever come to harm.
A lovely Lady in a queer blue gown
From out the second window frame smiles down,
Holding her Baby—'twould be great if He
Should climb down from her lap and play with me!
The middle picture is the best of all:
A bearded Man, tall as my father's tall—
Stands underneath a great, big, spreading tree,
And little children gather 'round His knee—
They seem to talk together like dear friends—
His face is beautiful.
When service ends,
The organ plays a lively tune, as though
It meant to tell us "hurry up and go."
So everybody crowds to reach the door.
But I turn back to look at them once more—
The Shepherd and the Lady and the Man—
And say good-bye as often as I can!
Their eyes all follow me—they cannot speak—
But church will be locked up a whole long week,
And they'll be lonely till next Sunday, when
They know I'll come to see them all again!

So you see what she saw was more important than what she heard. She did not understand the sermon but she did understand the church. What did she see?

She saw three pictures. She saw a Shepherd who cared for the little lambs, and she knew that Jesus was the Good Shepherd and that she was one of the lambs of His fold. Then she saw a lovely mother and her little babe. The mother was Mary, and the little child was Jesus, and she knew that all the wonderful Christmas story was in the picture. And last and best of all she saw a wonderful Man, with little children like herself climbing on His knee and playing at His feet, and she knew that the wonderful Man was Jesus who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God."

The church should be beautiful.

It does not need to have wonderful windows.

It is beautiful if Jesus is there.

XXXVII

PHARAOH'S PERFUME

"Filled with the odor."—JOHN 12:3

THERE is nothing that vanishes so quickly as perfume. Even when there are no young ladies around it disappears. It is like the passing of a breath of air. We travel along the road and catch a suggestion from a field of clover, or from a garden of flowers, and it is gone. "The grass withereth; the flower fadeth." That is why we keep perfume tightly sealed in glass bottles with close fitting glass stoppers, so that the fragrance will be kept, as we say, from evaporating.

Yet sometimes there is nothing that lasts as long as perfume. When the tomb of Tutankhamen was discovered in Egypt, among the strange and interesting things found was a little pot which contained a hard gum-like something. When it was placed in the hot Egyptian sun it began to melt and it gave off a very faint but fragrant odour. Five hundred or more years before the first Christmas day that little box of perfume had been placed in the sealed and strongly guarded tomb, and doubtless those who found it after its long rest in the dark sepulchre enjoyed

the same odour that pleased and delighted Ankherpaten, the queen of Tutankhamen.

I like to think about this old perfume with its fragrant sweetness, for it suggests the thought that after all, the sweet things are the things that last. Did they not find in one of the Egyptian tombs, years ago, a little jar of honey that, after the lapse of thirty centuries, kept its sweetness? Paul tells us that all the great things of the world pass away. He tells us that knowledge and philosophy and languages all change and disappear, but three things last and abide. He tells us that faith lasts, and hope lasts and love lasts and the greatest of these is love.

The other day I was in the office of a very rich and good man. People call him a millionaire, whatever that may mean. Well, what do you think he talked to me about? Not about money. There are plenty of rich men who never talk about money. Those who want to be rich usually talk about money. He did not talk to me about schools and colleges, although he gives away much money for schools and colleges. What was he thinking about? Well, he showed me a picture of his mother, and he talked to me a great deal about her. He is what you would call an old man, and has children and grandchildren of his own. His mother had died over fifty years ago, but her love was just as sweet and as fragrant as it ever was and it not only filled his speech to overflowing, but filled his heart and memory with its gracious and sweetening influence. Perfumes

that are made by capturing the sweetness and fragrance of flowers soon vanish, but love abides forever. When Mary poured out her box of perfume before Jesus the fragrance of it filled all the room, but that soon disappeared, but Mary's love for Jesus is as sweet and wonderful to-day as when she showed her Lord how much she loved Him, and Jesus said: "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

And this is the wonderful thing about the sweetness of love. To keep perfume made from flowers you must have it closely and carefully sealed. To keep the fragrant sweetness of love you must not seal it but scatter it. Think of that. Love like seed must be scattered. The Bible tells us that is what God does with His love. It is "shed abroad in our hearts" and fills the whole world with its fragrance. Yes, love keeps its sweetness longer than any perfume.

XXXVIII

THE BRAMBLE KING

"Come thou and reign over us."—JUDGES 9: 14

ABIMELECH was a bad man. He had a good father and his name was Gideon. He it was who with three hundred men and with pitchers and lights drove the Midianites out of the land. Strange as it may seem, good man that he was, he had a bad son. Abimelech was as bad a boy as any boy could well be, and when he became a man he was a bad man. And this is what he did. After the death of his father he killed all the royal family, all his brothers, to the number of seventy, upon one stone, and made himself king. He thought he had killed every heir to the throne, but his brother Jotham escaped. Abimelech was not only bad and cruel, he was both empty in his head and empty in his heart, and Jotham, his escaped brother, knew it and one day he told this story about Abimelech. The story is a parable, or as we would say to-day, a fable.

"One day," he said, "all the trees of the forest came together to choose a king and they went first of all to the olive tree and said, 'Be our king and reign over us.' But the olive tree said, 'I will not. Why should I leave my fatness wherewith

by me they honour God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees?' Then they went to the fig tree, and said, 'Be our king and reign over us,' but the fig tree said, 'I will not. Why should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees?' Then they went to the vine which bore such beautiful clusters of grapes and said, 'Be our king and reign over us,' but the vine said, 'I will not. Why should I leave my new wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees?' So not being able to get a king from among the fine and fruitful trees of the woods they went to the mean and worthless bramble and said, 'Come, be our king and reign over us,' and the bramble said, 'I will. Come and take refuge in my shade; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'" In this very pretty parable Jotham told the people that instead of making a good man their king they had only chosen a "bramble king," weak and useless.

Sometimes we too choose a "bramble king." Bad temper is a bramble king, and often we pass by gentleness and kindness and patience and give bad temper the first place and let it rule over our hearts. You know what I mean. A boy who gets angry when he ought to keep his temper and a girl who gets peevish and fretful when she ought to keep sweet puts the crown upon the head of a bramble king.

Envy is a bramble king. Perhaps of all the

bramble kings envy is the meanest and the worst. We are told that it was because of envy the priests delivered Jesus over to be crucified. Instead of placing the crown upon his head they placed it on the head of envy. It was because of envy that Cain slew his brother Abel. Envy leads to hatred and hatred leads to murder. In one of the verses in the Book of Proverbs—I wonder if you can find it—we have these words, "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?"

Lying is a bramble king. It has many names, such as falsehood, deceit, hypocrisy. It is one of the worst tyrants in the world. If a boy will only tell the truth he will come out all right. If a girl will be absolutely honest, honest in what she says, and what she suggests, and what she writes, she will come to a good end. But if there is lying and deceit in any life there will in the end be ruin. That is as sure as anything can be sure. A lying beam in a bridge, or a lying stone in a wall means that sometime something will fall. Here is another wise word from the Book of Proverbs:

"There are six things which Jehovah hateth;
Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him:

Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood;

A heart that deviseth wicked purposes,
Feet that are swift in running to mischief,

A false witness that uttereth lies,
And he that soweth discord among brethren."

There is only one who is worthy to be crowned king of our lives. His name is Jesus. His reign is like the fruitful olive, and fig, and vine, and not like the useless bramble. When Pilate offered to free Jesus the people cried out, "We have no king but Cæsar." What a strange thing to say! This is what they should have said, and this is what we will say, "We have no king but Jesus. His name is Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace." He is our King and we will crown Him Lord of All.

XXXIX

A BOOK IN A TREE

"Thy word have I hidden in my heart."—Ps. 119: 11

WHO ever heard of a book in a tree? I mean inside the tree. Of course a book could easily be in the branches or on one of the limbs of the tree, but I am thinking of a book inside the tree, and so covered by the wood and the bark that you could never guess there was a book there. I do not mean a tree with a hole in it either, but a good live solid tree, sound at heart, with a book inside the growing wood.

Well, I know of just that thing. It happened out in California where there are so many wonderful trees, and where nothing is too strange to have happened. A student by the name of Blockman was reading, and using as a back rest what is called a digger pine that was growing on his father's ranch in the Cathay Valley. The tree was a fine old favourite and had been a landmark for many years. Indian skulls and Indian objects of handicraft had been found near by, and people said the spot had been used long ago as a meeting place for Indian tribes. Plenty of people had sat under the pine tree and passed it by with a word of admiration, but had noticed nothing particular, but the young student became curious about a

sort of scar in the tree, and taking the blade of his knife took off a piece of bark and ran the blade into the tree. After a little probing there came out bits of paper, and then with the aid of a sharp ax he cut into the tree and found embedded in the tree a small leather covered Bible or prayer book which had been used as a book of devotion, and contained the date 1849. So since the middle of the nineteenth century the tree had had the little book in its keeping. It had doubtless been left in a notch cut in the tree, as on a little shelf, and the tree had grown around it and hidden it.

It is a curious and interesting story, but a tree is no place for a Bible. It does no good to hide a Bible in a tree. There is a better place to hide the Bible than that. In one of the Psalms, in speaking of the Word of God the writer says, "Thy Word have I hid in my heart." That's the place to hide the Bible. We are told that Alexander the Great kept a beautiful copy of Homer's poems in a costly casket which he had taken from Persia after his victory over King Darius. Darius had used it for his jewel box, but Alexander loved Homer better than any jewellery. It is fine to keep your favourite book in a fine box, or on a fine dresser, but there is a better place for the Bible than any box or dresser. It is in your heart. "How," you ask, "can you hide the Bible in your heart?" Well, how do you hide anything in your heart? Everybody hides words and sounds and sights and faces and things in their hearts, and you can hide the words and messages and pictures

and people of the Bible in your heart. You remember Mary the mother of Jesus hid all His words and pondered them in her heart. That is the way to use the Bible. Not to admire it and place it in a fine case but to hide it away in your memory. Learn its words. Memorise its great texts. Get to know its stories so that if you were ever to be in a place where you could not have a Bible, or if all the Bibles in the world were lost, you would still have yours hidden in your heart.

XL

THE SONG THE SEA SINGS

"The waves of the sea."—ISAIAH 48: 18

IN olden times, before the victrola, or the piano, or the saxophone, or the violin, or any of the hundred or more instruments came into use people had to find their music out in the wide, wide world. They listened to the deep, deep thunder which was played by the storm, to the hum of the myriad hosts of insects, to the stringed instruments made of reeds and rushes, to the rustle of the leaves, to the song of the morning stars, and to the music of the sea.

How much sweeter is the song of the sea than the grinding music of the victrola! There is an old story which says that Orpheus, the great musician of the classic world, lost his lyre in the sea, and the music we hear is just the playing of his harp, and there is another beautiful story, not quite so old, of a great golden organ that was the prize of an ancient monastery. It was famous throughout the land, and in foreign lands. It came to pass that the monastery was attacked by robbers who wished to remove its wealth and treasures to another land. The monks, however, were shrewd and not willing to let the organ fall into the robbers' hands. They carried it to the sea near by and sank it in the deep water. There

the golden organ still continues to play and to send forth its magical music, which is heard by all who listen to the waves of the sea.

Of course that is only a fairy tale, but it has a meaning, for to the people of the Bible the sea always meant trouble and danger. In the Old Testament we read that the wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, and in the last book of the New Testament we are told about heaven and it is said in that new world there will be no more sea, which means that trouble and sorrow will be at an end.

The old organ singing under the sea, and the sea itself singing because of the trouble it has with winds and storms, and rocks and reefs, tells us that even though we have trouble and difficulties we too may sing. Most of the sweetest singing the world has heard has come because of sorrow. It was in exile that the most beautiful Psalms of the Bible were sung. When they were in prison, in the night, at midnight, Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them, and the prison was opened and they were set free. It is good to sing when we are happy. It is better to sing when we are sad and wish to be happy, for everywhere and always we have a right to sing, for

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.

Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas;

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof."

"Be still and know that I am God."

This is why we are told over and over again to sing unto the Lord and here is the song I would like to have every boy and girl sing:

"For the beauty of the earth;
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

"For the beauty of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon, and stars of light;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

"For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony
Linking sense to sound and sight;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

"For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise."

XLI

A TREE THAT TOLD A LIE

"Nothing but leaves."—MATT. 21 : 19

THE fig tree of Palestine has figs first and after the fruit the leaves come. When Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem He saw on the hillside a fig tree, full of leaves, and knowing that the leaves were a promise of fruit He went forward to the tree, but found no fruit thereon. The tree had no fruit. It had only leaves. It told a lie. The presence of the leaves was a promise of fruit, and was an invitation to travellers to come and eat, but when He came the tree deceived him and was guilty of telling a falsehood, a lie.

Jesus said the Jewish people were just like that tree. They promised to serve God and to bring forth the fruit of a faithful life, and instead they were useless and good for nothing and their nation brought forth nothing but leaves. They, too, told a lie just like the fig tree.

There are a lot of things in the world that tell lies.

Sometimes money tells a lie. Here is a notice from the Bank of Pittsburgh signed by my friend Alexander Dunbar which warns me about lying money. First he warns me about a fifty dollar Fed-

eral Reserve note, and gives the number and the signatures, and points out how it may be detected as false. This is what the warning says, "In portrait of Grant white in the whiskers is too prominent, and a white spot appears over left eyebrow." You see the lie is found out by very little things. That is the way with most lies. Second there is a warning about a $1000 Federal Reserve note, but since there is little chance of any of us boys and girls getting our hands on a $1000 bill we can pass that one by.

Sometimes I imagine jewellery tells lies. People to-day are making pearls and opals and sapphires and diamonds, and it takes a real expert to tell the difference between true and false gems, but time tells the tale. The real jewel gets brighter and brighter as it gets older. The jewel that tells a lie soon loses its lustre and becomes like common glass.

Let me tell you about some boys and girls that are like the fig tree. They have nothing but leaves.

There is the girl who talks a great deal, but never does anything. She is always going to read, or sew, or study, or help around the house, but it all ends in talk. She is like the fig tree which had no fruit but leaves only. And here is a boy who is always busy at play and never works. He likes hearing it said that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," but he forgets that "All play and no work makes Jack a good for nothing boy."

Then there are both boys and girls, all around

us who live their lives, and receive from God the good things of life, and never pray. To live and never pray is like a fruit tree that has leaves but never has any fruit. A wise man once asked a question like this: "What is a man better than a sheep or a goat if he does not pray?" Could you answer that question? A prayerless life is like a fruit tree that bears nothing but leaves. All the great men of the Bible and of history have been men who prayed.

Abraham prayed. His prayer was:

"Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Moses prayed. His prayer was:

"Show me thy glory."

David prayed. His prayer was:

"The Lord is my Shepherd."

Isaiah prayed. His prayer was:

"Here am I. Send me."

Paul prayed. His prayer was:

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

The Disciples prayed. Their prayer was:

"Lord, save us! we perish!"

Jesus prayed. His prayer was:

"Thy will, not mine, be done."

George Washington prayed at Valley Forge and God gave him America.

Abraham Lincoln prayed during the Civil War, and God gave him courage and victory.

President McKinley prayed and his last prayer was:

"Nearer, My God, to Thee."

President Harding prayed and his prayer was:

"Lead, Kindly Light."

A prayer may be a word, a hymn, a look, a verse, a sentence, a life. Do you pray?

XLII

A WHITE STONE

"A white stone."—Rev. 2: 17

SOME time ago, when attending the Commencement exercises at Blair Academy I listened to a very interesting talk by one of the boys. It was called an oration. An oration is something like a sermon, only it is much more serious. He was speaking about why boys go to school, and what is the best thing they get at school.

He said there is a difference of opinion as to what is the best thing. You know schools and especially colleges give "a letter" to the students who excel. These letters are given sometimes to a boy for fine work done in study and sometimes to a boy for fine work done in play. That sounds strange, I know. But in school and college some boys work harder at play than they do at work. But they do not call it play. They call it athletics, such as football, baseball, basketball, running, jumping, and track. Well, this boy who was speaking said that schools vote as to which "letter" they would prefer to possess and some vote for letters given for "athletics," or play, and some prefer the "letter" given for scholarship, or study.

Let me tell you how Theodore Roosevelt felt about it. You know he had a fine family of boys. One of them, the youngest, was killed in the Great War in France, and another son Kermit, was with him on his great trip through the River of Doubt in South America, where they both nearly lost their lives. When Kermit was a lad at school his father often wrote to him. Kermit was interested in the play side of school life and once, when he was disappointed in not gaining a prize his father wrote him this letter:

DEAR KERMIT:

I was very glad to get your letter. I am glad you are playing football. I should be very sorry to see either you or Ted devoting most of your attention to athletics, and I haven't got any special ambition to see you shine overmuch in athletics at college, at least (if you go there), because I think it tends to take up too much time; but I do like to feel that you are manly and able to hold your own in rough hardy sports. I would rather have a boy of mine stand high in his studies than high in athletics, but I would a great deal rather have him show true manliness of character than show either intellectual or physical prowess, and I believe you and Ted both bid fair to develop just such a character.

There! you will think this a dreadfully preaching letter! I suppose I have a natural tendency to preach just at present because I am overwhelmed with my work. I enjoy being President, and I like to do the work, and have my hand on the lever. But it is very worrying and puzzling, and I have to make up my mind to accept every kind of attack and misrepresentation. It is a great comfort to me to read the life and letters of Abraham Lincoln. I am more and more impressed every day, not only with the man's wonderful power and sagacity, but with his literally endless patience, and at the same time his unflinching resolution.

Your loving
FATHER.

You see there was something Mr. Roosevelt thought worth more than winning in sport or win-

ning in study. To win in the battle of life is better than even winning the battle with books. Character is the best thing to get at school. To be a fine strong Christian boy is a better thing than to be a good sport, or to be a good scholar, but of course the very best thing would be to be good in all three. Many boys have been good sports, good scholars, and good Christians.

In the last book of the Bible there is a story told of the prize given to the victor. It was given not to the one who won in school or on the track, or with the ball, but to the winner of life's battle, to the one who was a victor over himself. And the story ends with these words, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it." This is the "letter," the "mystery letter" which God gives to those who win the prize. It is a white stone with the letters of "a new name" engraved on it. In olden times people had as signets and seals jewels with their initials and perhaps this verse refers to this custom. Anyway the "letter" which God gives as the best prize of life is given not for scholarship, nor for sport, but for goodness. The best thing in school or out in the world is to live a good life. At the close of the Commencement exercises Dr. Sharpe, the headmaster, asked the class that was graduating these five questions:

Are you afraid?
Are you honest?
Are you pure?
Are you in earnest?
Are you ready?

Can you answer these five questions?

After you have tried your hand and your heart answering these hard questions of the Headmaster try your hand and your heart memorising these fine verses by Charles Kingsley, which he wrote for a little girl friend who asked him to write her a song. They tell the story of the "white stone."

My fairest child, I have no song to give you;
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey;
Yet, ere we part, one lesson I can leave you
For every day.

I'll tell you how to sing a clearer carol
Than lark who hails the dawn or breezy down,
To earn yourself a purer poet's laurel
Than Shakespeare's crown.

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them, all day long:
And so make life, death, and that vast forever,
One grand, sweet song.

XLIII

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD

"They shall see his face."—Rev. 22:4

DO you think we would be able to agree about the most beautiful thing in the world? The world is full of beautiful things and men who look through the microscope and the telescope tell us we do not see a thousandth part of the beauty of the earth and sky with our naked eye. The world is more beautiful than we have ever dreamed. The stars and planets are brought near by the great telescopes and little flowers, snow crystals, the tiny insects, the scales of fish, the sand on the sea shore, the dust of the street shine like jewels when looked at through the microscope. There is a story told of a man who loved to see beauty and he always carried a microscope with him. He was travelling in Scotland and was visiting friends in the heather hills. Did you ever see Scotch heather? It grows wild in Scotland, out on the hills and on the moors, and is very beautiful. It has a little purple flower, and this great man of science was lying down upon the heather looking at a small heather bell in bloom. He looked at it long and lovingly and did not hear the sound of approaching feet and

knew not that any one was near until a shadow passed across the glass. When he looked up an old Scotch shepherd with his dog was looking at him curiously, wondering what he was doing in that strange place, with that strange brass instrument. The man rose and told the shepherd to look. The old man lay down in the heather and was a long time looking through the microscope. When he rose tears were in his eyes and he said, "I never knew it was so beautiful, and to think that I have trodden so many under my heavy foot." It was more beautiful than he had known.

Well, that is the way with all things that grow. If we had eyes to see we would behold glory in every flower, in every weed, in every blade of grass, in every drop of dew, and we would say:

"My God, I thank Thee, who hast made
The earth so bright,
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right."

But none of these things is the most beautiful thing in the world. I will tell you what is the most beautiful thing. It is the face of some one we love. It may be the face of a little child or of a girl, or a boy, or the fair face of your mother, or the strong face of your father, but I think of all the beautiful things you see the face of some one you love is the best. Artists tell us that the human face is the hardest of all hard things to paint.

And among all beautiful faces the most beautiful of all is the face of Jesus. For many centuries artists have tried to paint their idea of the face of Jesus, and not one has been satisfied. You have all seen such paintings. People go from all parts of the world to see Leonardo da Vinci's painting of Jesus and His Disciples, which is to be seen in a little chapel in the city of Milan. One of the greatest of painters once painted a picture of Jesus in the midst of His twelve disciples. This artist easily painted the faces of John and Peter and Judas and Thomas, and the other disciples, but when he began to paint the face of Jesus he failed. He could paint His hands, and his dress, and his hair, but he could not paint His face as he wished to do. It was more beautiful in his mind that his brush could make it. He tried again and again, but failed. The rest of the picture was all but perfect, but the face of Jesus was always appearing in his mind and then vanishing. At last he finished the picture and painted Jesus with a mantle thrown over His head, hiding His face. He thought when people looked upon the picture they could imagine what the face of Jesus ought to be better than he could paint it.

The face of Jesus must have been very beautiful. When Peter betrayed his Lord, Jesus looked at Peter, and when Peter saw that one look he went out into the night to weep. Little children looked up into His face and then climbed upon His knee and were satisfied. There is one won-

derful picture of Jesus in the Bible, and this is it:

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters."

The Bible promises that some day we shall not only see Him face to face, but we shall be like Him. There is only one way to be like Him and that is to love Him. When asked the secret of His beautiful life Charles Kingsley said, "I had a Friend." His friend was Jesus. To be a friend of Jesus is to become like Him.

XLIV

LOST!

"To save that which was lost."—LUKE 19: 10

THE other day I was reading a newspaper. I was on the train and had nothing else to do, so I read everything in it, and was surprised to read the number of things people had lost the day before. Here are some of the things that had been lost: a beaded bag containing a lease, a bank book, another bank book, a stock certificate, three "briefs" lost by three absent-minded lawyers, a pair of tortoise rim glasses, a black grip, a handbag containing a bank book—it is wonderful how many bank books are lost—glasses, keys, watch, pen, money, a pocket book, a brooch with forty one diamonds—think of a brooch with forty one diamonds—a diamond pin, a ring, an emerald ring, an old heirloom, a vanity box—what is that?—two rings, a pearl necklace, a circle brooch, a diamond bar pin, a sable neckpiece, sable fur scarf, a white pleated skirt—I suppose it was a new one—a German police dog, an Irish terrier, a Yorkshire terrier, a purse. It is all very interesting and I notice that the things are lost mostly by women. I wonder why? Perhaps you could answer.

And then, too, these are all little things. There is nothing lost in all this list that people could not get along without, such as dogs and rings and vanity boxes. They are all little things but sometimes big things are lost, such as ships at sea. Thomas Arnold, the great headmaster of Rugby, was once asked to join a party that was going in search of lost treasure ships. This great man who loved boys said he did not need to go searching in the sea for lost treasure. He could find plenty of lost treasure right in his schoolroom. What do you think he meant? He meant that boys could become lost and that it was the business of his life to find them. Of course, boys can be lost. The Prodigal Son was a boy, and Jesus said of him that he was lost. Boys and girls are lost when they are not in the place they should be.

Let me tell you a story. In the state of New York there is a monument erected where the battle of Burgoyne was fought. In the monument near the top there are niches where the figures of the men who fought in the War of Independence are given places of honour. One of these places is empty. A traveller looking at it one day said, "Why was the monument left unfinished and why is that niche empty?" An old resident of the village looked at him in surprise and said, "The monument is not unfinished and the niche is empty because it is empty. That was the place that should have been filled by Benedict Arnold, who instead of being true to his country was

false and played the part of a traitor. His country had a place of honour for him but he never filled it. He was a lost man."

Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." God has a place for each of us in His love and in His heavenly kingdom, and when we wander away from His love we are "lost." How many are lost! To seek and to save the lost Jesus came into the world and suffered and died on the Cross. There is a place prepared for each one of us. Let us see that it is not empty.

XLV

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS

"By love serve one another."—GAL. 5: 13

PEOPLE who sell flowers have a common motto. Their motto is, "Say it with flowers." You know what it means. If you have a friend who is ill, or who is getting well, or who is going to be married, or "coming out," or going away, or has a birthday, you can express to her your best wishes by sending her a bouquet of beautiful flowers which speaks the language of love and friendship.

It is impossible to miss the meaning of the flowers. They are so bright and beautiful and fragrant. They are always giving, always saying lovely things, always sending forth sweetness.

We would never think of sending flowers that are withered or fading. We send fresh flowers that are open in their loveliness. Sometimes flowers fade, sometimes they wither, sometimes they sleep, but a true flower is at its best when it is filled with fragrance and beauty. Have you ever seen a sleeping flower? There are some flowers that close up when the night comes on, there are flowers that close as the air cools and then open as the air gets warm again, there are some flow-

ers that have a sort of sleeping sickness, which causes them to curl up and hang their heads. They are put to sleep as it were by their own fragrance and I was reading not long ago about a new anæsthetic which is being manufactured from such sleeping flowers. Ask your father what an "anæsthetic" is.

But we do not send flowers that sleep and hang their heads to our friends. We send flowers that send forth fragrance, and reveal their beauty and tell the story of our friendship as long as they last. Flowers are just like love. Love is shown best when it gives and serves and helps. Love is service. Love speaks not merely in words but in acts. There is a little story about three children, a brother and two sisters, who each claimed to love their mother, and I suppose they did, but one loved her best of all, and this is the story:

"I love you, mother," said little John;
Then, forgetting his work, his cap went on,
And he was off to the garden swing,
And left her wood and water to bring.

"I love you, mother," said rosy Nell;
"I love you better than tongue can tell."
Then she teased and pouted full half a day,
Till her mother rejoiced when she went to play.

"I love you, mother," said little Fan;
"To-day I'll help you all I can;
How glad I am that school doesn't keep!"
So she rocked the baby till it fell asleep.

Then stepping softly she fetched the broom;
And swept the floor and tidied the room,
Busy and happy all day was she,
Helpful and happy as child can be.

"I love you, mother," again they said—
Three little children going to bed.
How do you think that mother guessed
Which of them really loved her best?

Love does things for others. It serves others. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Love always thinks of others. It is like God. "God so loved the world that He gave." Love always gives. It is always awake. It never sleeps. It never fails. The finest thing said of Jesus was this: "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

XLVI

THE SHANDAKEN TUNNEL

"A river of water of life."—Rev. 22: 1

A TUNNEL sometimes goes under a hill and through it trains and traffic pass. Sometimes a tunnel is under a river and sometimes through it, as, through the tunnel under the Hudson river great electric trains travel, taking millions of people every year right into the heart of New York City.

But I know another kind of tunnel. I know of a tunnel under a mountain, and through it passes not trains, or traffic of any kind, but a great flowing stream of fresh water. This tunnel is in the Catskill Mountains, and is eighteen miles long. They began to bore through the mountain in 1917. Two groups of workmen began on each side of the mountain and they each bored away every day, night and day, for more than five years, and one morning they met nearly half a mile under the mountain and the tunnel through the great hill was completed.

That tunnel is called the Shandaken Tunnel, and through it there flows from the mountains 250,000,000 gallons of fresh crystal clear water, which is carried right into the homes of the millions of rich and poor who live in the great

city of New York. I think that is one of the most wonderful things I know. In the hot, hot days of summer, those who live in alleys and slums and boulevards have cool fresh mountain water to drink. There could be no greater blessing than that. When the work was begun the committee in charge quoted the words of the 121st Psalm, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help."

But I know of a still more wonderful tunnel, only I do not know where it is, or how long it is, or whether it goes through mountains. I have an idea it runs through clouds and sunlight, past sun and stars and empties its crystal water at our very doors. I read about where it begins. It begins at God's throne, and opens into this world of ours. Here is the story:

"And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

This great stream of water which flows from out the throne of God is carried down to where we are, and every one who wishes may stoop down and drink. I think you know what that story means. The water of life is the love of God that comes to us through Jesus. It begins with God and comes down to earth and flows from Calvary and from the open Easter Tomb and every one who drinks of that water is satisfied.

It flows past every door, and rich and poor, white and black, people of all lands, may drink and be content. Jesus often compared the Gospel to fresh water. He told the woman at Jacob's well that every one who drank of the water of that well would thirst again but whosoever drank of the water He would give would never thirst.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,—
"Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one
Stoop down and drink and live!"

I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

There was plenty of water in the Catskill Mountains, but a tunnel had to be made before the little children in New York could use it. There was a boundless source of life and love in God, but a way had to be opened for it to flow to us, and this way was opened in Jesus. There is an unfailing source of supply of love and grace in the Gospel for all men, but it must be taken to the homes of those who have it not. Every missionary and Christian worker is like a tunnel through which flows the healing waters of the Gospel. Is your life like a tunnel? It is said that Oliver Cromwell, who was once the ruler of England, visited the Cathedral of York, and there he saw twelve statues of the Apostles in solid silver. "What are they doing there?" he asked. Then he said, "Take them down and let them go about

like their Master doing good." So they were taken down, melted, and turned into money to be of use in the world. Not everything that is beautiful should be turned into money and perhaps Oliver Cromwell might have left the silver statues in the Cathedral, but certainly every good Christian is not for ornament but for use, and should, like his Master, be in the world to do good. He should be a tunnel through which goodness and blessing flow, out into the world.

XLVII

SOWING AND REAPING

"One soweth and another reapeth."—JOHN 4:37

IF we would reap we must sow. If we are to reap others must have sowed seed for us. If others are to reap we too must sow seed for them. The trees under whose shade we sit were likely planted by hands we never knew. The wheat that we eat was sowed by people we shall never see. The Gospel we enjoy was preached by missionaries and ministers long since forgotten.

For this is the wonderful thing about all life. It grows and multiplies. I was reading the other day about a certain flower called the spotted orchis. Each plant has 30 seed boxes, or pods, and in each pod there are some 6,200 seeds. If we were to allow 400 bad or useless seeds to each pod, then there would still be 174,000,000 seeds to each plant. This seed would sow an entire acre of land, and next year the seed from that acre would sow a whole state and the next year if all the seed gathered from the state were sowed again there would be enough to cover the whole earth. And this is the queer thing about seed. It will grow and multiply if it is bad as quickly as if it is good. Sometimes we think bad seed grows quicker. A

little girl asked to tell the difference between a flower and a weed said, "A weed is what wants to grow and a flower is what does not want to grow." Good seed and bad seed will both bring forth a harvest, and the thing we must look after is to see that we sow only good seed and then we will reap a good harvest.

Years and years ago over in Germany there was a farmer whose home was far in the woods. He was very poor and lived in a humble cottage with his wife and two little children, a boy and a girl. The boy's name was Hans and of course the girl's name was Gretel. One dark night in winter when the snow was lying deep in the woods and the wind was blowing and whistling around the cottage there was a tap, tap, tap, on one of the little windows and a voice was heard, "Oh, let me come in. I am so cold and so hungry. What shall I do? I have nowhere to go, and I am so cold." Hans and Gretel ran quickly to the door, saying, "Come in, poor, poor little child, come in." So they brought the little strange child into their warm home and gave him half their supper and put him to bed in their own little bed. Then Hans and Gretel lay down upon the hard floor satisfied that they had been kind to a poor lost child. Soon they were all fast asleep, for children do not lie awake. In the dark night Gretel sat up and shook Hans and said, "Listen, Hans. Listen to the sweet music." Then Hans, too, sat up, and listened. It was the sweetest music they had ever heard. It sounded like

sweet voices singing to the tones of a silver harp, and these were the words of the song:

"O Holy Child, we greet Thee!
With notes of love and praise.

"O Holy Child, in peace sleep on,
While o'er Thee we will watch till morn.

"Blest be the home that welcomes Thee
On it shall Heaven's blessing be."

Then they remembered it was Christmas morning. A great light filled the room and going to the window they saw the morning dawn in the sky, and in front of the cottage home a group of children all clothed in white, and playing upon harps of gold. They were so surprised that they could not speak, but turned to waken the little stranger, but when they looked the little lost child was standing beside the bed, no longer dressed like a wanderer, but clothed in purest white. "I am the Christ Child," He said. "I wander through the world and bring happiness to all good children. Since you welcomed me last night, and gave me your own supper, and let me sleep in your bed, I will give you to eat of the Bread of Life and you shall never know cold or hunger again." Then the music ceased, the children disappeared, and the little stranger was gone. But a great peace filled their hearts and their home seemed like heaven.

Hans and Gretel had sown kindness and love, and had reaped a golden harvest of peace and joy.

XLVIII

LITTLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

"Behold the birds."—MATT. 6:26

DID you ever hear of St. Francis? He is known as "St. Francis of Assisi." Assisi was the place where he lived, and he is called a saint because he was a very, very good man. When he was young he was rich, and careless and worldly, but he was led to give his life to Christ, and after that he lived as a poor man and went about doing good. Some one has said that St. Francis was the only true Christian that has ever lived. He was very kind and friendly to every one, especially to the poor and the sick, and made friends with birds and animals, and called them his "little brothers and sisters." He would speak of my little brother the fox, and my little sister the lark. He spent much time in the woods and the fields, and learned to know how friendly is all wild life as we call it.

The birds are very friendly little creatures. Did you ever think how friendly and familiar they are? We call them by friendly names. There is the Daw, for example, and we call him Jack,—Jack Daw, just as if he were a well known friend.

Then there is the Redbreast, that is out after the early worm, and we call him Robin—Robin Redbreast we call him, just as if he belonged to the family. There is the little Wren, too, that wants to find a tiny hole in which to make a nest, and because she is so little and so friendly we call her Jenny—Jenny Wren. Then there is the Pie, and we call her Margaret—for short we say Mag, and Mag-pie is one of our rather curious friends who hangs around like a poor relation. But they are all friendly folk, and they are friendly with each other. The Bible tells us that there will come a time when even the lion and the lamb will lie down together, and love will be king over all. We read of owls living in the same house in the ground with prairie dogs and we have all seen a hen playing mother to ducks and turkeys and geese. I was reading not long ago of a man who watched a flock of birds. The birds flew on in a great flock, but three birds lingered behind. One of the three would lie for a long time in the grass, while the other two birds stood beside it. After a time it started to fly and the two birds flew, one on each side of it. Again it rested, and the two companion birds waited till it was ready to fly, and then again flew with it. The man who was a lover of birds discovered that the bird that rested so often had a broken leg, and the two kept it company, and helped it, until they were all able to rejoin the flock. The man who watched the birds was Mr. W. H. Hudson and the birds were what are known as military starlings.

Jesus said that boys and girls are much better than sparrows or starlings or any kind of birds. And so they are, and they can show how much better they are than the birds by being kinder, friendlier, and more helpful than the birds. They can be like little brothers and sisters to each other. After the Great War was over two Austrian young men found themselves prisoners in Siberia. Siberia is a terribly cold country, and they longed for home. During their life in prison they became great pals, and were like brothers to each other. One day news came that a certain number of prisoners were to be given their freedom, and were to sail on the last boat that would leave before the winter closed the port. One of these two chums was selected to go and of course the other was compelled to remain. There was nothing to be done. Each man leaving was allowed to take one piece of baggage with him, and just one piece, no more. What do you think this friendly pal did? He left behind him all his clothes, and everything that belonged to him and rather than be separated from his friend he doubled him up as you would a jack-knife, sewed him up in canvas, and staggered aboard the ship with his friend as his only single and best possession. Surely this man thought of his chum as his brother. He was his friend, his keeper.

When we bear the burdens of others we become their brothers. Once during the life of Jesus His mother and His brothers came to speak with Him. This is the story:

"And one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

We, too, can be the little brothers and sisters of Jesus by doing His will and serving those about us who are in need.

XLIX

WORK!

"My Father worketh."—JOHN 5:17

THE world is a busy place. Some one has said that life is just one thing after another and love is just two things after each other. The world is a busy place. Every thing works.

The birds work. They are busy from morning to night. First they are busy with their nest. Then they are busy with their eggs. Then they are busy feeding their baby birds and then they are busy getting ready to move south for the winter. In a single nest a man counted 2379 little feathers. That pair of birds had made 2379 trips carrying little fluffy feathers with which to build a nice warm snug nest for their little children. Yes, birds work.

And bees work. In a colony of 50,000 bees there are about 30,000 workers. Each one of these 30,000 working bees makes ten trips every day. They go out after honey. In a single day these working bees visit 300,000 flowers, and when you remember that it takes 37,000 visits to make one pound of honey you can understand how hard the bees must work.

Insects work. All sorts of flies and mosquitoes

and bugs and spiders work. You remember about the spider Robert Bruce saw at work. Robert Bruce was king of Scotland, but he was in hiding from the enemy. He had failed and was sleeping one night in a friend's barn. Early in the morning he awoke and saw a spider trying to lay its silken cables and weave its web, but again and again it failed. At last it succeeded. Then Bruce rose from his bed in the straw and said, "If a spider can succeed after so many failures, so can I." And he did. Yes, spiders work and all sorts of insects work.

Beavers work. I have seen among the hills of Pennsylvania great trees which the beavers have cut down with their teeth. They cut them so the tree would fall across the stream and then they built a dam and made themselves a home. Do we not sometimes say that we have worked like a beaver? Yes, beavers work.

Jesus himself was a great worker. When He was a boy He worked in the carpenter shop at Nazareth, and when He became a man He worked day and night. When His mother found Him in the temple He said to her, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" Jesus was a worker. He worked every day in the week, and on Sundays, too. He worked at doing good.

If you and I are to succeed we must work. We must work at our studies. We must work at our tasks. We must work at our religion. When Archbishop Temple was a boy he was much given to talking and arguing and one day, when he was

arguing with his mother about something she had asked him to do, she said, "Don't argue, Freddie, work." He never forgot his mother's words, and he did work, and working made a man of him.

During the Revolution a corporal in the army was giving orders to a little squad of men who were raising a heavy timber to be used in building a bridge. The men were not quite able to lift it. An officer not in military dress happened to pass and asked the corporal why he did not take hold and help. "I am a corporal," he replied. Then the stranger came forward himself, gave a few orders and laid hold of the beam with the men and soon it was in place. Then mounting his horse he said with a smile, "Mr. Corporal, when you have another such job send for the commander-in-chief." The stranger was General George Washington. He was not afraid to work.

The Bible has a great deal to say about work. We are told to rest one day in seven, because six days we are to work. Jesus could not find time enough to do all he wished to do. He said, "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." And to all His followers Jesus says:

"Go."

"Go work."

"Go work in My vineyard."

L

SAFETY FIRST!

"Beware!"—MATT. 10: 17

WE live in a very unsafe world. All around us we see signs, "Safety first." Everywhere there is danger and even nature puts up her signals and bids birds and insects, cattle and sheep, beware!

Safety first! Did you ever hear of the Venus fly trap? It is a plant which grows in the Carolinas. It grows in among the bog moss and has leaves about an inch long. But the important thing about the Venus fly trap is three prominent bristles which stand out. They are the trap signal, for the very instant a fly, or insect, or bug touches one of these bristles there is a quick action on the part of the plant, and the fly is caught just like a rat in a trap. It is a wonderful device. If you touch it with a piece of paper the trap will clap together. You can do it a second time, and the trap will close, but if you do it the third time the plant fooled twice will pay no attention to you. The world is full of traps in which little creatures that do not watch are caught. The spider's web is another trap, and there are holes and snares and baits always prepared for the unwary.

Safety first! Did you ever hear of the electric eel? You know there are nearly fifty different kind of fish that have some sort of electric apparatus about them. The most interesting is the electric eel. It has its home around the Amazon and the Orinoco Rivers in South America. It is about eight feet long and is nearly all tail. On each side of this strange fish there is a sort of electric battery and if the eel can touch its enemy with its head and tail and so make a complete contact, as we say, it can produce such an electric shock that it can kill its enemy, whether it be fish or fowl, or creeping thing. Yes, this is a dangerous world.

Safety first! Did you ever hear of the little white ants that belong to Africa and are hardly ever seen. They work in the dark. They cover up their work. They attack whole forests and no one ever sees them at work. They make their approach through dark tunnels and secrete themselves and before they are ever known to be present the forest is destroyed. The missionary may rise from a perfectly good chair at night and sleep quietly and in the morning the chair will be in the same place and will look the same, but when he sits upon it, he finds himself and what is left of the chair in a heap on the floor. The white ants have come in the night and eaten all the inside out of the legs, and seat and frame of the chair and left only a sort of paper shell. The same thing may happen to the whole house. You

may never see an ant but the house may one day fall like a house of cards. Yes, this is an unsafe world.

Safety first! Take heed! Beware! Be on your guard! Stand fast! Be strong! Put on the whole armour of God! Everything carries about with it its weapons of war. The dog has its teeth, the cat its claws, the horse its heels, the cow its horns, the goat its head, the bee its sting, the bird its beak, the fox its cunning.

In the olden days when the world was more unsafe than it is now people carried bows and arrows and swords and guns and dressed and slept in armour. Our danger is not from swords and guns and daggers, but from unseen enemies. Like the white ants, our enemies work without being seen, and we are told to be always on guard and to always wear the whole armour of God. If you will read the last chapter of Ephesians you will see what makes up a complete suit of God's armour.

First, the girdle of truth.
There is no safety in a lie.
Second, the breastplate of righteousness.
The right life is the only safe life.
Third, the sandals of peace.
Peace has more victories than war.
Fourth, the shield of faith.
"I will trust and not be afraid."
Fifth, the helmet of salvation.
The Christian life is the fearless life.

Sixth, the sword of the Spirit.
The true sword is the Word of God.
Seventh, the habit of prayer.
Prayer will always kill sin.

This is the whole armour of God. It is the secret of safety, and he who fights in the armour never fails. Some day I want you to read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where the story is told of one by the name of Christian who fought a terrible battle in this same armour and won a handsome victory.

"Soldiers of Christ—arise!
And put your armour on."

LI

THE WASPS' NEST

"The sting is sin."—1 Cor. 15:56

ELFIN CAMP had been shut up during the long, long Canadian winter and when we arrived to open it for the summer, Ahmic Lake was dressed in loveliness and the cabin was already entertaining a few guests. Of course Oliver was there, but the guests were not of his inviting nor of ours. They were little creatures of the forest who had come out of their deep dark nests in the silent woods, and finding no one occupying the spacious rooms and verandas had made themselves at home.

At first, after our coming, they were silent and shy and only little by little did they introduce themselves. First a little chipmunk made himself at home on a chair, and then a red squirrel winked and shook his tail at us from the porch railing, and then a field-mouse, fleet as a deer and dressed in white and tan, passed quietly but observantly across the table. They were surprised and so were we. In the night they held some sort of meeting and from what we heard they did not agree very well, for there was much chattering and prancing about.

At breakfast next morning other and less wel-

come guests made their appearance. Breakfast was served on the veranda beside the silver birches and the evergreen pines and hemlocks, and when we came to eat of the good things Oliver had provided, lo, other guests, uninvited and unwelcome, came also. They were yellow-jackets, dressed in their best, with their jazz music and their impudence, and they came to the feast of sugar and plum-jelly and such other tasty things as took their fancy. They refused to leave. They claimed their rights and began to fight. One was killed, but two others came instead. Another was killed and three were left and so the battle went on until breakfast was over, but the wasps were still there with their buzzing and their stinging.

What could be done? We could wait and kill them one by one, but perhaps there were hundreds, and their big lead-coloured nest was up in the beams right beside the breakfast table. But there was another way to deal with wasps. Our Doctor-guest waited until both the wasps and the children were quiet and then he took a little silver and glass thing he called a hypodermic, which he filled with chloroform. You know what chloroform is. It puts people to sleep. When the wasps were all quiet the doctor put the point of the hypodermic in the hole of the nest and gave those nasty, stinging wasps a good dose of chloroform and closed up the hole with a little cotton. There was a whirl of excitement for a minute, and then all was quiet and the nest was

taken down and all the sleeping wasps were burned in the kitchen fire. That was the end of the wasps.

I have been thinking a good deal about those wasps. Wasps sting. Their sting is poison. They bring fear and suffering and there is only one thing to do with them and that is to destroy them. It is dangerous to treat them as guests and permit them to play with little children. The best thing to do is to kill them quickly, kill them with a club, or a broom, or a brick, or lull them to sleep with the sweet breath of the doctor's chloroform.

Sin has a sting just like a wasp.

There was a wasps' nest in the Garden of Eden and one of these wasps stung Eve and then stung Adam and at last drove them out of the garden and their paradise was lost. The wasp that stung Adam and Eve was called Disobedience. It still flies around and stings and poisons the lives of men and women and little children.

There was a wasps' nest in the first home. In that first home were two little boys, Cain and Abel. They had the same father and mother, ate the same food, heard the same stories and looked at the same stars, but one day a wasp called Envy stung Cain and drove him mad, and in his madness he rose up and killed his brother. It was that same poisonous wasp that stung the priests and the Pharisees, and in their fury they led Jesus to the Cross.

There was a wasps' nest in the first Christian

Church. When the early Christians had gathered together and every one was in love with each other and with their Lord a man named Ananias and his wife Sapphira were both stung by a wasp called Lying. And pain and sorrow and death came to that first little Christian Church.

Think of the wasps' nest that Paul found in the city of Ephesus! He names some of the wasps, "Idolatry, Sorcery, Enmities, Strife, Jealousies, Wrath, Factions, Divisions, Parties, Envyings." What can you do with such a dangerous nest as that but destroy it? And the way to destroy all such nests is not with chloroform and a hypodermic but with the sweet and living breath of the Spirit of God. In the presence of God's love, hatred and all things evil shrivel up and die.

Do you remember an old story in an old book, called the "Arabian Nights," about an island that was a magnet? It was out in the ocean and a great ship came too close to it and the magnetic island drew it closer and closer, and without sound of hammer or bomb the great ship fell to pieces, for the mighty magnet had quietly drawn out every rivet and every bolt and strewn the wreckage upon the sea. That of course is a fairy story, but it may be made a true story. Jesus is a magnet. He is the greatest magnet in the world. He said, "I will draw all men unto Me." If we live near Jesus He will not only draw us near to Him, but He will draw out from us every feeling of hatred, every thought of envy, every

wasp's sting, every unkind word, and all evil things will die, not one by one, but altogether, like the hundred or more wasps in the nest that were so quickly and so quietly chloroformed. A friend visiting in the home of William Blake, the poet, asked for some good advice about how to succeed. The poet was silent for a few moments and then in a quiet voice said to his wife: "What do we do when we need help?" She replied, "We kneel down and pray." To keep near to God is to keep near to peace and power and security.

LII

THE SWEETEST THING IN THE WORLD

"Abide now at home."—II CHRONICLES 25: 19

THE sweetest thing in the world!

What is it? I suppose you will say sugar. When we wish to speak of anything as very sweet we say "sweet as sugar," or "sweeter than honey." Yes, and we also say "sweet as music," "sweet as summer," and nothing is sweeter than summer unless it be spring.

"Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie."

There are lots of sweet things in the world when you begin to think. We speak of a "sweet tooth," a "sweetheart," "sweet William," whoever he may be, and "sweet girl graduates," whoever they may be, but none of these sweet things is the sweetest thing in the world. The sweetest thing in the world is Home. What do you think? Is not "Home, Sweet Home" the sweetest thing you know?

I wonder if boys and girls to-day know "Home, Sweet Home"? For over a hundred years fathers and mothers and grandmothers have been singing "Home, Sweet Home." It was written by an

American, John Howard Payne, in the month of May, 1823, and during May, 1923, it was sung on land and sea, in homes, churches, and music halls all over the world. For Home is the sweetest thing in the world, and "Home, Sweet Home" is the sweetest song. I half believe that not one of you can say or sing the first verse. Suppose you try.

"'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home;
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere,
Home, Home, sweet, sweet Home!
There's no place like Home! there's no place like Home!"

When we think of it everything in the world has a home. The world itself is nothing but a big wonderful home. It has the sky for a roof, the sun for light, the clouds for shade, the mountains for walls, the grass for a floor, the flowers for carpets, continents for rooms, islands for gardens, birds for music, winds for automobiles, forests for summer homes, the rain for shower baths, and the oceans and lakes for swimming pools, and in this wonderful home of nature everything that lives has its own home. The fish has its shady nook, the bird its nest, the beaver its dam, the wild goats their shelter, the bears their caves, the lions their lair, and the sheep their fold, and to each one home is the sweetest thing in the world.

Nansen, the Arctic explorer, carried a pigeon into the far North and from that white wilderness

it flew over ice and ocean, and at last came to its own home in Norway with its message of life and love. Our hearts, too, fly away to God, who is our real Home.

What is it that makes Home so sweet? I will tell you. It is love. Nothing else will do.

"One rubber plant can never make a home,
Not even when combined with brush and comb,
And spoon, and fork, and knife,
And graphophone, and wife.
No! Something more is needed for a home.

"One rubber plant can never make a home;
One day did not suffice for building Rome.
One gas-log and a cat
Can't civilize a flat.
No! Something more is needed for a home."

That something else is love, and what is love? I will tell you. Love is a way of living. There are many ways of living. There is a worldly way, and a selfish way, and a thoughtless way, and then there is love's way. Love's way is to live for others, and it is because we live for others in our home that home becomes the sweetest place in the world.

There is a story about an old man by the name of Hartmann. He was a Quaker, and his only son went off to war away back in the days of slavery. After a great battle the old man went to headquarters and there learned that his boy had not returned. The father thought he had been killed, but went out into the battle field. He looked into the faces of the dead and wounded,

and as night came on he lighted a lantern and searched for his missing boy. The wind blew out the light, and in the darkness he went on with his search and as he searched he called "John Hartmann: thy father calleth thee." For hours he searched and no answer came. "John Hartmann, thy father calleth thee," and then he heard a voice, "Here, father," and in a little while the old man had his son in his arms, ministering to his needs, and history tells us that he nursed him back to life. That is what love does.

We say that Heaven is just like Home, and I think if you will listen you will hear God, our heavenly Father, calling, and you will hear Him calling your names, "John, Charles, Margaret, Jane, thy Father is calling thee," and as He listens I am sure He will hear the answer, "Here, Father."

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